AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

by Ambassador College

A Bible correspondence course asking why the Bible matters in the modern age. The lessons guide students through the fundamentals of Scripture study, beginning with the question of why the Bible remains relevant in the computer and space age.

38 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. Lesson 01
2. Lesson 02
3. Lesson 03
4. Lesson 04
5. Lesson 05
6. Lesson 06
7. Lesson 07
8. Lesson 08
9. Lesson 09
10. Lesson 10
11. Lesson 11 Part 1
12. Lesson 11 Part 2
13. Lesson 12 - Part 1
14. Lesson 12 - Part 2
15. Lesson 12 - Part 3
16. Lesson 13
17. Lesson 14
18. Lesson 15
19. Lesson 16
20. Lesson 17
21. Lesson 18
22. Lesson 19
23. Lesson 20
24. Lesson 21
25. Lesson 22
26. Lesson 23 Part 1
27. Lesson 23 Part 2
28. Lesson 24 Part 1
29. Lesson 24 Part 2
30. Lesson 25
31. Lesson 26 Part 1
32. Lesson 26 Part 2
33. Lesson 27
34. Lesson 28
35. Lesson 29
36. Lesson 30
37. Lesson 31
38. Lesson 32

Lesson 01

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 1 Why Study the Bible in the

Space Age?

Why should we want to study the Bible? Is the Bible up to date in the computer age? Exactly what IS the Bible, and how should we study it to really UNDERSTAND it? This lesson gives you the ANSWERS from your Bible!

WHAT are we? Were we put on earth for a purpose? If so what do you think is that purpose?

Why are so many lives empty, discontented, unhappy? How may life become happy, abundant, successful, prosperous and filled with interest?

What is the real cause of wars, and the way to world peace? What lies beyond death—is there really a way to eternal life? Are these questions important? One might ask, could anything else be more important? If you wanted to know the answers to these basic questions of life, where would you go?

What is The Foundation of Knowledge

Stop and think! Would a Creator, having supreme intelligence, wisdom and love to think out, to plan, design, and bring about all creation—this earth, and all life and life-functions upon it—have left His created beings in ignorance of His purpose—the purpose of their being here—and the laws that would bring them the peace, happiness, joy and everything good that men have been striving to attain since the beginning?

God Almighty did not hide these all-important truths from human minds. He made them accessible to mankind. He committed His treasure house of basic knowledge to writing. He revealed that knowledge in the Holy Bible— the very FOUNDATION of knowledge—His instruction book for mankind. Yet almost no one has ever found the answers so plainly written there! The Bible is simply God’s divine revelation of BASIC NEEDED KNOWLEDGE which man is not capable of finding out for himself by any other means.

God equipped man with the powers and abilities to discover and use the laws of science. But absolutely no tools or instruments of science can ever tell you if there is life after death, the purpose of your being alive, where you are going, or the way to a happy, abundant life and to universal peace here and now. Our scientists, our world leaders and our statesmen have failed utterly to tell us these answers, or to lead us into the universally desired peace with happiness and abundant living. The Bible reveals all this—and more. This course shows you where to find that revealed knowledge in the FOUNDATION of knowledge! A Living Book! But why do most people think the study of the Bible would be a dull, uninteresting, irksome task—to be done, if at all, only as a duty out of fear of a harsh God?

Simply because people have not known God, or what He is like—and because they have never really begun to understand the Bible! In this study we shall come to really see that God is LOVE (1 John 4:8,), not a harsh, stern God; that God wants every one of us to be happy, and to enjoy an interesting life to the very full—every second of it! And we shall, once we begin to understand the Bible, come to find it the most fascinating, the most interesting, as well as the most profitable and enjoyable study of our lives. Where to Begin? Where would you Begin?

One natural and proper starting place to begin our study of the Bible would be at the very beginning—with God as Creator—at the very first chapter of Genesis and compare the Bible account of creation with the modern theory of evolution; to study the creation of man, the origin of Satan, the first sin, and to continue on from there through the Old Testament.

Another natural starting point is with the beginning of the New Testament. While the very first words of the entire Bible are "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), yet the real beginning of the New Testament, in actual time sequence of events, is John 1:1:"In the beginning was the Word." So the account of the pre-existence, the birth, and work of Jesus Christ—who is called "the Word" or Spokesman of God—also begins with the words, "In the beginning." And there is still another natural starting point—the one we have adopted. That is to begin with this very present age in which we live—this time of upset world conditions—this time when science and technology have produced the destructive forces that threaten the extinction of all life on this planet—this "time of the end" just before the end of this age and the second coming of Jesus Christ!

We feel the Bible will mean more to you if you fully understand its vital relation to your life today, and its direct connection with current world events.

If you were to try to understand a map of the world, it would not mean much to you unless and until you could first put your finger on the precise spot on the map where you were at the moment. Only then could you clearly see and comprehend the rest of the world in relation to your own location on the map.

We feel you will understand the Bible better, and find it more interesting, if you view it all—its history and prophecy, its teachings and divine revelations—from the vantage point of your life here and now. The Bible will become clearer if you see how world events have led up to the very time and conditions in which you live, and what the future has in store for you and all mankind. But before we begin this fascinating study, we need to know why so few really understand the Bible—and how YOU can understand it.

Why is there Such Confusion?

Why do we find such confusion—such disagreement as to what the Bible says? Why don’t the hundreds of differing church denominations and sects agree on what their acknowledged textbook says?

Why do so many individuals, capable of understanding almost any other book, say: "I just can’t understand the Bible"?

Take a recognized textbook on biology. Show this book to ten different biology professors from ten different colleges and universities. Ask them what it says. They’ll all give you basically the same

answer. People seldom disagree as to what recognized textbooks say—except when it comes to the one book of all books—the Holy Bible! But take the Bible to ten different professors of theology, or ministers of religion, and you'll probably receive ten different answers to just about any question you might ask about it. Do you know WHY?

Here certainly is the enigma of the ages. The most important, yet the least understood book of all books is the world's BEST SELLER—the book owned by more people than any other. It is the one book that has lived in spite of every effort to stamp it out down through the ages. The Bible is the only book which has foretold, centuries in advance, the chaotic conditions of our world—the only book that explains the meaning of confused world conditions—that opens before us to understand in advance the wonderful, peaceful, happy world tomorrow. It is the one book that predicted, in advance, the rise and fall of specific nations and governments—that reveals the DESTINY of the world. No mere humanly inspired book could have revealed these amazing events. Such prophecies must have been divinely inspired.

Here is the book that, in spite of human misunderstanding, has changed more lives than all other books combined. And yet—it is the book that almost NOBODY knows!

Why is the Bible Misunderstood? The Bible is the most misunderstood book in history. The most twisted, distorted, misrepresented, maligned and lied about.

Why? The answer is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.The Apostle Paul was inspired by God to write: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So the Scriptures are profitable for the purpose of reproving and correcting us! But how many people do you know who are even willing to be corrected when they are in error—to be REPROVED for the wrong things they do? People simply do not like to be reproved and corrected. They love praise—they like flattery—but reproof and correction they surely hate!

Now do you see why it is so difficult for people to understand the Bible, and to agree on just what it says? The Bible is God's great spiritual mirror. It shows up every flaw in our thinking, reveals every spot on our characters. It pictures us as we really are—as God sees us, not as we like to think we are, or as we like to have other people look upon us.

"For the word of God," we read in Hebrews 4:12,"is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword"—it cuts deep, and it cuts both ways—"and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Yes, it opens up and exposes our innermost thoughts. When little children do things that are wrong—that have been forbidden—do they usually admit it freely and frankly? Or do they usually deny it as long as possible, then try to cover it up, excuse it, justify it, or place the blame on somebody else?

We are all only little children grown up. When our heavenly Father speaks to us, through His Holy Scriptures, and reproves, rebukes, or corrects us, we usually do not like to admit our errors, our faults, our wrong ways. And so men began, centuries ago, to interpret the Bible. As a result, the Word of God has become twisted, wrested, perverted, with almost every false and counterfeit meaning imaginable being read into it. Instead of teaching and expounding the plain, simple, intended meaning, we now have hundreds of HUMAN INTERPRETATIONS of the Bible!

Instead of acknowledging the truth, men seek to justify their own ways by PERVERTING the sacred and holy Word of God! The Apostle Paul was inspired to write in 2 Timothy 4:1-4 that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine. People have turned away their ears from the truth and have turned to FABLES palmed off as the truth of God's Word. Isaiah prophesied that in these latter days men would demand: "Prophesy [preach] not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:8-10).

We can clearly see why people do not understand the Bible. They are not yielded to the Eternal's will—they are filled with the fear of men instead of God. They tremble at the thought of what people say, instead of what the Word of the LIVING GOD has to say!

We read in Psalms 111:7-8,Psalms 111:10 : "All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness....The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have they all that do his commandments...."

David had understanding. And David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105).

Today's generation is like that of Jesus' day, of which He said, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Yes, the Bible is light lamp unto our feet—a light unto our path. But the world is surely in gross darkness.

Meaning was Locked Up Until Now

Bruce Barton wrote a book about the Bible entitled The Book Nobody Knows. This title certainly has been true—until recently!

After revealing many prophecies to the prophet Daniel, God told him to "Seal the book, even to the time of the end: [when] many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). In the time of the "end" all knowledge, as well as knowledge of the Scriptures, was to be increased! The Moffatt translation of the Bible renders "the time of the end" as "the crisis at the end." The whole world is now in a time of grave crisis and is rapidly approaching a condition of total chaos—we are now in the crisis period at the close of this age! God said that at this time "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10,emphasis ours throughout lesson).

Though printed copies of God's Word and a general knowledge of the Scriptures are widespread today, the world as a whole still does not understand the Bible. It is in utter confusion religiously, politically and militarily. The world does not really know where it is headed, nor does it comprehend the lessons of the past. Never has mankind needed understanding of the knowledge of God more!

Spiritual Understanding Never More Needed

Experts tell us that scientific and technical knowledge has doubled in the past decade—but so have world troubles! Obviously material knowledge and scientific and technological know-how

have not brought man the ANSWERS to world problems. This knowledge has only led to the proliferation of problems, and has led mankind to the brink of nuclear annihilation!

Former President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower had a glimpse of the future. He said in his inaugural address: "In the swift rush of great events, we find ourselves groping to know the full sense and meaning of the times in which we live..... How far have we come in man's long pilgrimage from darkness toward light? Are we nearing the light—a day of freedom and peace for all mankind? Or are the shadows of another night closing in upon us? ... Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet."

Mr. Eisenhower recognized the fact that man may soon destroy himself. President John F. Kennedy saw the same reality. President Johnson also came face to face with this awesome threat. Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, Regan, Bush had to grapple with the same specter. And now, the current President faces the same dilemma. But how may world disaster be averted? What is the solution to the arms race—to a nuclear "Armageddon"? At the close of World War II, just following the surrender of the Japanese on board the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay, General Douglas MacArthur put his finger on the only possible solution. He said these fateful words: "Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations.... Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at the door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh" (Reminiscences, p. 459).

Notice these remarkable words carefully.

Although he was one of the greatest and most successful generals of modern times, MacArthur believed that our world has had its last chance to wage a major war and to end it short of the annihilation of mankind! But he also saw the only solution to this world's ills to be a renewing of man's spirit—an improvement in human character!

Let's be honest. Let's face the facts. There is a cause for every effect! Because man has chosen to go his own way and has rejected God's revealed knowledge, mankind is reaping the consequences! Man's own ways are the CAUSE of the misery, wretchedness, and trouble filling the world today! Cut loose from God and the understanding of His Word, man's misguided scientific and technological genius has led him to the brink of self-annihilation! The problem, therefore, basically is theological, as God plainly says in His Word: "My people are destroyed for lack of [true, spiritual] knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

There is Only One Hope

People tend to delude themselves into thinking there is no special danger right now—that the world has always been as chaotic as it is today. Of course, human nature has remained basically unchanged. The ways of carnal-minded men have always resulted in death and destruction (Proverbs 14:12).

But, in prophesying of our day, the Apostle Paul said, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:13). This, coupled with the stark reality that never until now has human annihilation been possible, ought to WAKE US UP!

Jesus Christ, the greatest newscaster who ever lived, knew the ultimate result of the terrible state of affairs men would bring on themselves in this end time. He predicted: "Except those days should be shortened, there should NO FLESH BE SAVED [ALIVE—Moffatt]" (Matthew 24:22).

Yet, your Bible shows there is hope for mankind! God Almighty has promised to intervene in world affairs. He will not allow the scientific genius of man to destroy, all life on this planet. He has promised to send Jesus Christ again—this time to SAVE us from ourselves and bring us peace at last!

You Can Begin to Understand How, then, can you begin to really understand the Bible? Here is how you may begin this exciting adventure.

Study the Bible to find TRUTH. Be careful to "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Then believe God—believe His Word as you would accept any other book in which you had confidence. And above all—do not try to interpret the Bible by trying to read your own meaning into it. Remember that the Bible basically interprets itself. When the Apostle Paul came to Berea, the people found he was preaching something utterly different than that which they had been taught and had believed. They did not know whether Paul was a false prophet, or a man sent from God. Notice what they did: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind [that is, without prejudice], and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). So study your Bible without prejudice—but be careful—prove all things as the Bereans did—search the Scriptures whether those things be so! Read and study your Bible daily—check up for yourself and see what it really does teach. Don’t just assume that what you have always heard and believed is the truth.

Before You Begin This course is not just a study of the lessons alone. The lessons are intended to show you where to look in your Bible for the verses relating to the subject under study, and to put them together for total understanding. Therefore, you must open your Bible to every scripture reference given in answer to the questions we ask, and carefully read and actually study these passages. (Our course is based on the King James Version of the Bible because it is the most widely use Bible in the world today.)

Writing or typing out the scripture references is NOT a requirement of this course. But over the years, many of our students have found it helpful to copy the answers and keep them in a notebook with their lessons. Copying all the Bible verses takes a little more time, but it is very helpful in remembering what you have learned, and in reviewing your lessons at any time. If you have a computer bible and can look up the scriptures on the computer and insert what it says in this document, and re-read it, you will learn much. These documents can be copy and pasted into your word processor and/or bible programs.

If you would rather not follow this method of study, you still should turn to, and actually READ the scripture references given in answer to the questions. This way you will prove the truth for yourself right in your own Bible, and fully comprehend the subject under study.

Many of our students also set aside a certain time every day for their study period but here again, the exact time of day and length of time you spend in study will have to be dictated by your own circumstances, and/or personal preference. If the letters we continually receive from our students are any indication, we think you'll find it difficult to pull yourself away from studying, once you really get into it!

One final word about tests. You will notice a quiz at the end of the lesson. It is a general review of the material you will cover in this lesson—an educational way to help you remember the important facts you will have learned, and to check your own progress. Each lesson will contain a similar quiz. Once you're through taking the test, you simply check your answers with the correct answers on the last page, and then rate yourself. It's that easy!

LESSON 1 What Is the "End of the World"?

1. Was Jesus ever questioned about the "end of the world" and the signs that would point to His return? Matthew 24:3 Notice what Christ's disciples were really talking about when they asked Him about the "end of the world."

COMMENT: The New Testament, as originally inspired by God, was written in the Greek language. The Greek word translated "world" here in Matthew 24:3 is aion, meaning AGE—not the physical planet on which we live. Jesus, then, was questioned about the end of an "age" and about his scheduled return, rather than the destruction of the terrestrial globe we call earth. The end of man's present society would mean the end of an age, but the earth itself would continue to exist! A Time of Great Trouble 1. Did Jesus prophesy that a time of great trouble would occur on the earth just before His return? Matthew 24:21.

2. What did Jesus declare would happen if these days of tribulation were allowed to continue? Matthew 24:22.

COMMENT: The Moffatt translation renders this verse clearer as "not a soul would be saved alive." This verse, then, is not referring to spiritual salvation at all, but to being saved from physical destruction—from premature death!

3. Did Jesus prophesy that only the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be threatened by total destruction? Or did He plainly say that no one would be safe from the threat of annihilation? Same verse.

COMMENT: The Revised Standard Version says "no human being would be saved...."

4. Who will intervene in world affairs to cut short this time of trouble, and thus prevent the annihilation of all humanity? Mark 13:20.

COMMENT: These verses do not mean that God will alter the time of Christ's scheduled return, but that just as He planned originally, He will intervene at the very moment humanity would otherwise destroy itself. By His scheduled intervention, He will CUT SHORT the days of man's rule over man, which would otherwise lead to the destruction of all human life. No other Time Like It!

1. Has there ever been a time of trouble such as will occur just before Christ's return? Matthew 24:21;Mark 13:19.

2. Were any of the Old Testament prophets inspired to foresee this same time of worldwide peril? Jeremiah 30:7;Daniel 12:1.

COMMENT: Since each of the preceding four prophecies reveal that the future period of crisis will have no equal, they can only be referring to one great climactic period of worldwide trouble!

3. How did the prophet Joel symbolically describe the horrible events to take place at the close of this age? Joel 2:1-3.

COMMENT: Joel's God-inspired prophecy pictures the very same time of trouble prophesied by Christ, Jeremiah, and Daniel. This prophecy refers to events soon to occur at the close of this age, for only in this age of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons has such widespread destruction and the extermination of human life been possible!

4. Could the symbols in Revelation 9:2-10,Revelation 9:16-19 indicate the torment and mass murder resulting from the use of modern weaponry?

COMMENT: John described what he saw; in a vision God had miraculously revealed to him. It was a mysterious, frightening spectacle. The creatures he saw were obviously symbolic of weapons God knew man would be capable of inventing in the end time.

5. Let us momentarily consider a time, over 4300 years ago, when God intervened in human affairs to postpone what we see threatening the world today. What did human beings decide to do? Genesis 11:4.Was this for the purpose of keeping themselves united? Same verse. What did God do to frustrate their plans? Genesis 11:5, Genesis 11:7-9. Why? Genesis 11:6.

COMMENT: Genesis 11:6 clearly indicates that God confused the language and scattered the people at Babel in order to restrain the misguided inventive genius of man! When human beings come to freely speak one another's languages, and share scientific and technological knowledge as they are doing today, then virtually anything man's mind can conceive of would be possible for him to achieve—witness his exploration of planets and the invention of weapons capable of destroying all life. By confusing the language and scattering the people at Babel, God PREVENTED man from accomplishing long ago what he has done today. It was not yet within God's plan to allow man to advance that far that soon! Could anything be clearer? Can you see that we are living in the time Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:1-51?--the time when men would have at their disposal the power to erase all life from this earth! The Causes of War

God promises He will intervene in world affairs to prevent the annihilation of humanity, and to bring us world peace. And in order to ensure continued peace, He will also prevent future wars by changing that which causes war. Let's understand.

1. Does the Bible clearly show that war is a result of acting according to the inordinate lusts within man? James 4:1-2.

COMMENT: Unrestrained human nature, with its pride, vanity, jealousy, lust and greed is plainly the CAUSE of war!

2. Does knowledge tend to increase pride? 1 Corinthians 8:1.Since we live in an age of mushrooming scientific knowledge which makes it possible for a few men to possess tremendous

power, will the inordinate lusts of men "in the last days" cause them to become better and better, or worse and worse? 2 Timothy 3:1-4,1 Timothy 3:13.

3. What is the end result of decisions and actions that seem right to great leaders and people in general? Proverbs 14:12.

COMMENT: This principle is so important that God inspired its repetition in Proverbs 16:25.

4. What deceives man into believing that actions which end in death will bring peace? Jeremiah 17:9.(Remember that in Scripture the heart is often spoken of proverbially as the center or seat of human thoughts and emotions.) Then can rulers be deceived by their own lusts into believing that their evil deeds are right and good for the world? Same verse.

COMMENT: The governments of this world promise peace. But men have only brought us more wars and have now led humanity to the brink of annihilation!

5. Do rulers even know the war to peace? Romans 3:17.What did God inspire Isaiah to write concerning man’s real understanding of the way of peace? Isaiah 59:8.

6. What will happen to human plans for "peace"? Isaiah 33:7-8.When ambassadors of peace weep bitterly—when the land is laid waste—will God then intervene? Isaiah 33:10.

COMMENT: Throughout the Bible, war is pictured as the result of lust or covetousness. Lust is a basic characteristic of human nature. But can the heads of government of this world CHANGE human nature? Of course not! Nearly 6,000 years of human history have proved that man, left to himself, is totally incapable of effecting this change. Throughout history, negotiations for peace have always been accompanied and supported by the most vigorous preparations for war! The story is no different today. Can any human government, therefore, permanently stop war? Obviously not. When you look at it that way, the answer becomes clear: Only GOD can permanently stop all war, because only God has the power to CHANGE human nature! But exactly how will God create and maintain world peace once Jesus Christ returns? The only real and logical solution to the problems of world peace has already been planned. And the entire plan is revealed in your Bible.

World Government to Bring Peace 1. Does God intervene in world affairs without first revealing it to His prophets? Amos 3:7.

2. Thousands of years ago, did God’s prophet, Isaiah, foresee a time when God would establish His Kingdom here on earth? Isaiah 2:1-3.Is it to be a literal world-ruling kingdom? Daniel 2:44;Psalms 67:4.

3. Will there be warfare then as there is now among nations? Isaiah 2:4.Will people be taught the way to peace and productivity? Same verse.

COMMENT: The very One who created man is coming to establish the Government of God on earth, and to teach man the way to peace—to guide his inventive genius entirely into peaceful channels.

4. Did Micah also foretell the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth? Micah 4:1-4.

COMMENT: An all-powerful, world-ruling government is indeed coming that will solve all global problems fairly and righteously for all peoples—a government ruled not by carnal men, but by the living, all-powerful Creator of the universe!

5. Notice who Isaiah prophesied would rule over the earth. Isaiah 11:1-4.Is David the "stem," or son, of Jesse? Acts 13:22.Then is the "rod" or shoot plainly Jesus Christ? Acts 13:23. Is the "branch" growing out of Jesse's roots also referring to Christ? Jeremiah 23:5-6.

COMMENT: The prophecy in Isaiah 11:1-16 predicted, centuries in advance, that Jesus Christ would one day rule the earth!

6. Before Jesus was born, did an angel tell Mary, His mother, that His destiny was to take over an actual throne and rule on this earth? Luke 1:32-33.

7. Did Daniel foresee the time when the saints—spirit-born Christians-will be given rulership over the earth with Christ? Daniel 7:18,Daniel 7:21-22, Daniel 7:27.

What Is the True "Gospel"?

1. Was Jesus sent to this earth nearly 2,000 years ago to proclaim the words of the Father? John 12:49;John 14:24.What message was included? Mark 1:14;Matthew 9:35.Did Jesus say one must believe that "gospel"? Mark 1:15;Mark 16:15-16.

COMMENT: The word "gospel" means good news, or glad tidings. Jesus went about preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God! The gospel of Jesus Christ is simply the very same gospel He preached. Jesus' gospel is not primarily a message about Himself personally, or about "receiving Jesus." It is not primarily a message about the events in His life and of His becoming the Savior of the world—although it most certainly does include all that.

Notice the four things necessary to constitute a kingdom: (1) territory, (2) a king or ruler, (3) subjects or citizens, (4) laws and government. In the coming Kingdom of God, the territory will be this earth; the king will be Jesus Christ; the subjects will be this earth's peoples; and the laws will be God's Ten Commandments and spiritual principles administered by the DIVINE government of God.

2. Did Jesus send forth His apostles and true ministers to preach that same gospel (including all His teachings) to the world? Luke 9:1-2;Matthew 28:19-20.Was His gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to be preached in all the world just before the "end" and His second coming? Matthew 24:14;Mark 13:10.

3. What gospel did Philip preach? Acts 8:12.And Paul? Acts 19:8;Acts 14:22.Did he preach the same gospel among the Gentiles at Ephesus? Acts 20:25.What gospel did he preach to both Jews and Gentiles at Rome? Acts 28:23,Acts 28:28-31.

4. Did some false ministers in Paul's day try to pervert the gospel of Christ? Galatians 1:6-7.What condemnation does he pronounce on any who would try to preach any other "gospel"? Verse 8. Was it really a double curse? Galatians 1:9.

COMMENT: Your Bible shows there is only ONE TRUE GOSPEL! We hear many "gospels" about Christ today, but how many do you hear preaching the "gospel of Christ"—the gospel He

preached—the "gospel of the Kingdom of God"?

God’s Plan

God has set aside a period of 7,000 years to fulfill His plan for mankind. And God’s little-understood plan for man began nearly 6,000 years ago. The pattern for this plan is given in the first two chapters of Genesis. It is the week of seven days.

1. Is a thousand years as a "day" to God, and vice versa? 2 Peter 3:8.

2. In Hebrews 4:4,Hebrews 4:11, the seventh day of the week is pictured as a type of the peaceful "rest" on earth which will follow Christ’s return. Is the time of Christ’s rule over the earth, which will follow this present age of human misrule and senseless warfare, specifically called a thousand years? Revelation 20:4.

COMMENT: Since the last "day" of God’s plan is 1,000 years, then it logically follows that the preceding six "days" would amount to 6,000 years—a total of 7,000 years.

3. When the disciples asked Jesus if He would restore the Kingdom of God in their day, what was His reply? Acts 1:6-7.

COMMENT: The apostles did not fully understand the plan of God while Christ was with them. They thought the Kingdom of God would be established in their day. But before they died, they understood Christ would return at a much later date. Peter said: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise [of coming again] ...but is longsuffering..." (2 Peter 3:9). God is patient. He has refrained from intervening in world affairs for nearly 6,000 years. Why?

Because God has allotted mankind 6,000 years in which to learn that the ways of man bring nothing but SUFFERING and DEATH!

Many Bibles contain tentative chronological dates showing that human life may have begun on this earth 4,004 B.C. (Other evidence it may have been a little earlier.) Nearly another 2,000 years have elapsed since Christ’s birth—totaling just about 6,000 years of human civilization to date.

How awe-inspiring and significant that in OUR PRESENT AGE—in the very time that the world is threatened with the extinction of all life--6,000 years have almost elapsed. How exciting that Jesus Himself said that when we would see all the events He foretold taking place, He would come again— this time to rescue humanity from annihilation, to set up the Kingdom of God, and to bring us lasting peace!

You have seen in your Bible a brief summation—a "thumbnail sketch"—of God’s solution to this world’s problems. You have begun to understand the urgent necessity for Christ’s promised return. In Lesson 2, you will learn more about Jesus Christ’s spectacular intervention in world affairs as revealed in the amazing, detailed prophecies of your Bible.

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished this test, check your choices with the correct answers listed at the end of the test, and then rate yourself.

1. What is the Bible? A. Merely the history of an ancient people's quest for a concept of God. B. A revelation of basic needed knowledge man is not capable of finding out for himself. C. A treasure house of pious thoughts. D. An incomprehensible mystery.

2. This course of Bible study begins with present world conditions because A. it's the only logical place to begin. B. prophecy is the only important subject in the Bible. C. the Bible will mean more to us if we relate it to our lives today. D. the Bible itself does not begin at the beginning.

3. Which is the Bible NOT profitable for? A. Doctrine. B. Praise of oneself. C. Instruction in righteousness. D. Reproof and correction.

4. The Bible is not understood by most people today because A. its wording is incomprehensible. B. it contradicts itself. C. men have tried to interpret it to justify their own ways. D. they haven't tried to interpret it.

5. Great world statesmen tell us A. the United Nations has the answers to world problems. B. man now has the capability of annihilating all life on this planet! C. Christ will establish world peace. D. men will forsake warfare and learn to live at peace.

6. What is the basic cause of war and human suffering? A. The inordinate lusts of carnal-minded man. B. False political ideologies such as Communism and Fascism. C. Poverty. D. Lack of educational and economic opportunity.

7. What does God reveal about man's knowledge? A. Everything will turn out right as long as we do the best we can with what we know. B. Only our national leaders know the way to peace. C. The way that seems right to human beings ends in death! D. Man uses knowledge independently of his lusts.

8. Before God acts in world affairs, He always A. tries to convert the world. B. reveals His plans to His prophets and ministers. C. sends plagues on the world without prior warning. D. sends Jesus Christ back to earth.

9. An angel revealed to Mary that A. her Son would rule the earth from heaven. B. her Son would found churches which would reform the world. C. Jesus would be no different than any other child. D. Jesus would rule on the earth.

10. The pattern for God's 7,000-year plan is revealed in A. the process of evolution. B. the Millennium. C. the seven churches of Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. D. the seven-day week.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. Daniel was told the book was to be sealed so that nobody—not even the wise—would understand it at the time of the end. T F

12. The "end of the world" refers to the destruction of our planet—this physical orb on which we live. T F

13. The time of trouble prophesied for the end of this "age" will be worse that any period of trouble that has ever existed before. T F

14. Mankind would have reached the point of self-annhilation long ago had God not restrained man’s misguided inventive genius shortly after the flood. T F

15. Jesus Christ came to proclaim a message about the Kingdom of God being set up "in our hearts," rather than on earth. T F Match the number phrase with the letter phrase

16. Result of human lusts

A. "Israel Message"

B. Peace through men

17. Only hope for survival

C. Our "perilous times"

D. Today’s popular "gospel"

18. Gospel of Christ

E. Christ’s Intervention

F. Curse for perverting Christ’s Gospel

19. Galatians 1:8

G. Gospel of Grace

H. A "day" to God

20. 1,000 years

I. Jesus the Savior

J. Kingdom of God

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-B 5-B 9-D 13-T 17-E 19-20 correct - - - excellent 2-C 6-A 10-D 14-T 18-J 16-18 correct - - - good 3-B 7-C 11-F 15-F 19-F 13-15 correct - - - fair 4-C 8-B 12-F 16-C 20-H

Lesson 02

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 2 WORLD PEACE--Really? The search for world peace continues while arsenals of lethal weapons grow larger. Experts predict the earth will soon become an burnt up relic—UNLESS world conditions are dramatically REVERSED. Exactly what does the future hold for mankind? This lesson reveals the ANSWERS in the prophecies of your Bible!

World leaders and scientists are frankly frightened by the prospects of the future!

They warn that man now possesses the means of committing COSMOCIDE— suicide of the whole human race—and even talk in terms of "overkill." They realize something totally unforeseen must soon occur to stop the present trend of world events-=or man will finally DESTROY himself!

What Statesmen Warn In 1961 the late President John F. Kennedy warned a hushed United Nations Assembly: "Mankind must put an end to war—or war will put an end to mankind.

"Today," he said, "every inhabitant of this planet must contemplate the day when this planet may no longer be habitable.... The mere existence of modern weapons--10 MILLION TIMES more powerful than anythat the world has ever seen, and only minutes away from any target on earth—is a source of horror....

"Together," said President Kennedy grimly, "we shall save our planet- or together we shall perish in its flames"

What President Kennedy told the United Nations in 1961 was not the ranting of a wild-eyed fanatic, but is the day-to-day reality of the world in which we live. Today, the estimated number of stockpiled nuclear bombs is already enough to wipe out the world’s population many times over!

Former U.N. Secretary-General U Thant warned in 1969: "I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude from information that is available to me as Secretary-General that the members of the United Nations have perhaps 10 years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion, and to supply the required momentum to world development efforts."

Many other world-renowned statesmen and scientists, too numerous to quote in this lesson, speak fearfully of the END OF THE WORLD—the END of human civilization! But the Arms Race Continues In spite of these terrifying, imagination-defying facts, the arms race continues to escalate toward nuclear insanity!

Take a look at "MIRV," which stands for "Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicle." Instead of one missile carrying one warhead, the Soviets and Americans have developed and deployed missiles which carry many warheads. One such MIRV can do the same job as could 10-14 missiles previously. With MIRV alone, the U. S. is capable of destroying the Soviet Union

many times over! And, of course, Russian MIRVs could similarly "overkill" the United States of America!

Staggering, but a fact nevertheless! The arms race is also spreading to outer space. The Soviets have developed a "killer satellite" capable of blowing up American early warning satellites. But what's to prevent the design of satellites capable of carrying hydrogen-bomb warheads and dropping them on preselected targets? Politicians and military experts generally agree that whoever gains military control of space will be able to rule the world!

What will come next?

Many other bizarre, frightening weapons are in various stages of development. These include the pure fusion weapon (a "clean" H-bomb), the neutron bomb, and the laser bomb. Scientists say any of these weapons theoretically has enough destructive potential to annihilate all life on the earth!

It sounds incredible, but it's true! And the record of history proves that every weapon man has ever developed was eventually used!

Chemical and Biological Warfare

Nuclear warfare is only one of many ways that could bring the total destruction of mankind in the very near future. Though the subject has been given little publicity, some nations are now producing new super-weapons which may be even deadlier than nuclear bombs! Fifteen nations, including the U. S. and U.S.S.R. already have a chemical and biological warfare potential.

Tens of thousands of gallons of deadly nerve gas—odorless, tasteless and virtually invisible—have already been manufactured and stored. One drop, breathed or applied to the skin, can kill instantly!

Speaking about biological warfare, Dr. Barry Commoner, director of Washington University's Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, warned that chemical and biological agents make nuclear weapons "look like a child's toy."

Weapons of a chemical or biological nature are far less expensive to produce than complicated nuclear weapons. Any country with a good size brewery could manufacture germs about as easily as beer! But a huge question mark hangs over the advisability of using biological weapons on an enemy nation. Even the best-informed scientists are afraid the after-effects of an all-out biological war might backfire! Epidemics could spread around the world.

Only one thing is certain. No one can predict what actually would happen, because such biological weapons have never been (nor can they ever be) adequately tested until they are actually used on the battlefield! Can Man-made Plagues Be Controlled?

Scientists are faced with the grim question of whether or not a man-made plague could be controlled, once started, since full-scale testing is impossible. Dr. Commoner asserted that even natural epidemics are poorly understood, and that we can rarely predict how fast they will spread, or how many people will be affected.

Moreover, in biological warfare, he warned it is likely that the infectious agents will not be those which occur in natural epidemics, but special variants selected or modified in the biological warfare

laboratory. In this case it would be nearly impossible to be confident about the actual course of an artificial epidemic, once it started. It might fizzle out, or it might spread so unexpectedly as to engulf friend and foe alike! A biological warfare experiment which aptly illustrates Dr. Commoner's fears took place during World War II. Now Safrin Gasses and Chemical viruses.

Britain tested biological weapons as early as 1941, when there was widespread fear that the Axis Powers might use germ warfare. In one test, Gruinard, a remote island off the northwest coast of Scotland, was sprayed with anthrax bacteria. The targets were sheep, which soon became infected and died. But the anthrax bacteria were so durable that the isle is still unsafe for people today! It is expected to remain that way for at least another 100 years!

Because of the grave doubts arising from such experiments, some observers ominously conclude that "to initiate the use of plague or anthrax diseases that can kill more than 90 percent of their victims, would be to set in motion a DOOMSDAY MACHINE on the planet..." (Seymore M. Hersh, New York Times Magazine, Aug. 25, 1968).

There are Other Ways to Annihilation!

There are yet several other global crises which could lead to the utter destruction of mankind in the not-too-distant future.

Human life can only be sustained by air, water and food. But today man is polluting and poisoning all three of these necessities. Air pollution is now recognized as a growing international menace—one which not only threatens the health of man, but seriously affects the continued existence of all life.

Water pollution is another massive threat. Most of our rivers and lakes are so seriously polluted that supplies of drinkable water in many places have reached a CRISIS STAGE! Now, increasingly, it is being found that pollution is also seeping into our underground water supplies. A study by the U. S. Public Health Service indicates that millions of people in the United States are drinking water that is unfit for human consumption!

Man is infamous for having depleted and ruined the soil out of which his food must grow. More recently, he has vastly speeded up the process by using artificial fertilizers which actually defeat their very purpose by locking up other soil elements, thereby robbing vegetables, grains and fruits grown in such soils of the life-sustaining minerals and vitamins necessary for good health. Modern man also uses poisonous insecticides which not only exterminate more helpful forms of life in the soil and air than harmful, but also enter the ecological web of life and threaten the extinction of higher species of life. Even man himself is potentially in danger!

Other potential dangers to life are the host of inadequately tested rodenticides, fumicides, herbicides, flavor enhancers and artificial preservatives. Scientists fear that these and other products of our modern society could cause irrevocable damage to succeeding generations.

Add to these urgent problems the worldwide revolution in the weather- droughts, floods and earthquakes—and epidemics of disease. And if all these fast-accelerating evils do not destroy humanity soon, the experts say the effects of the POPULATION EXPLOSION will! The Population Explosion Many leading scientists have warned that the greatest single crisis facing the world is the population explosion.

Although this explosive growth of the world's population has slowed down some within the last decade, it is still an unsettling fact. that the sheer numbers are still increasing at the same time that fewer and fewer nations are self-sufficient in food production. Just six countries are the major food exporters to the rest of the world community. If one or more of these exporter countries should experience serious shortfalls in food production due to bad weather or other unforeseen factors over several years, millions will go hungry and vast numbers will starve to death!

Population experts reveal that if present trends continue, the earth's population will number over six billion people by the year 2000! How will they be fed? Hungry people are restless people. And starving people seldom just sit down and quietly die. They riot, revolt, pillage and murder in order to get food! Massive food shortages could spark future FOOD WARS which could finally engulf the entire world in horrible struggles for survival!

What is Needed: "A Strong Hand From Someplace" An accurate appraisal of MAN'S ONLY HOPE for survival appeared in a leading U. S. news magazine in 1965. This appraisal indicated that among government officials the prevailing view is gaining acceptance that tensions and world problems are fast becoming too deep-seated to be solved except "by a strong hand from someplace." That strong hand is coming—but from a source most people least expect! The Prophet Isaiah reveals that source in your Bible: "Behold, the LORD GOD will come with STRONG HAND, and his arm shall rule for him..." (Isaiah 40:10). Your Bible shows there IS HOPE for mankind! The great God of your Bible says He is going to send Jesus Christ again—this time to SAVE us from ourselves and to establish the Government of God on earth! He will not allow the misguided scientific genius of man to destroy all life from this planet!

Think of it! The glorified Christ—returning in all the splendor, supernatural POWER and GLORY of God Almighty—coming to save mankind alive—coming to STOP escalating wars, nuclear mass destruction, human pain and suffering—coming to usher in peace, abundant well-being, happiness and joy for all mankind! This was Predicted Centuries Ago The sad state of our world was predicted and written in advance. Over 1900 years ago, the greatest newscaster the world has ever known foretold today's chaotic world conditions! He foresaw today's scientific discoveries and technological advancements. And He foresaw the outcome of it all.

He knew that men would produce the destructive forces that now threaten cosmocide! This famous newscaster warned: "And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved [alive—Moffatt Trans.]" (Mark 13:20). This great news prophet was Jesus Christ of Nazareth—the same Jesus who is coming again to intervene at the last moment for this world. What He foretold has been written in your Bible all these centuries. No other book is as up-to-date as your Bible!

Jesus Christ foretold today's world conditions in vivid language. He prophesied in advance the wars, famines, disease epidemics and natural disasters that are now occurring increasingly before our very eyes! Jesus gave the exact sequence of events that would take place in our modern, pulsating space age. Scientists and world leaders—most of whom know little of Bible prophecy, and even reject the Bible—readily admit that events He prophesied are taking place right now—in our generation! For some time influential people have been using biblical terminology to describe current world conditions. Notice just a few:

Dr. Binay Sen, former director of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said, "If the rate of food production cannot be significantly increased, we must be prepared for the four horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Robert S. McNamara, former president of the World Bank: "We have to see the population problem as part... of a much wider social and political crisis that grows deeper with each decade and threatens to round off this century with years of unrest and turbulence, a ‘time of troubles’ [emphasis ours] during which the forces of historical change threaten our frail twentieth-century society with disintegration."

Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, research writers: "When we consider the planet’s still-increasing population, we may even wonder whether the traditional figure of the harvester may not be turning before our eyes into that other image of the man with the scythe—the archetypal image of Death itself."

Prophecy Is for us, TODAY! But some will still object, "There have always been ‘prophets of doom.’ People thought the world was coming to an end in the Middle Ages when the black death struck Europe."

These skeptics simply do not understand God’s timetable of prophecy. The end of man’s rule must, and will, come as God has scheduled it. Though some had ignorantly thought otherwise, the end of man’s rule was not due in the Middle Ages.

We need to understand that every prophecy has a definite time setting— usually not in the prophet’s own day. Most prophecies of the Bible are yet to be fulfilled, and are for our time—TODAY!

Jesus taught that there is a timetable of prophecy—that certain specific events must occur in the months and years ahead before He returns to rescue humanity from annihilation. Let’s begin to understand these prophecies. Let’s learn exactly what the world’s greatest newscaster foretold for our time. But before we begin, be sure you have your Bible in front of you. You should turn to all the Scripture references given in answer to the questions we will ask—and carefully read them. PROVE what we say for yourself in your own Bible!

Thousands of our students have found that making notations in their lessons and Bibles as they study is especially helpful when they review their lessons later. Some also write or type out in full these scripture references.

Now let’s begin.

LESSON 2 There will be Scoffers in the Last Days Our day is the day of so-called "Christian Atheism" when even theologians scoff at the idea of God’s existence and the prophesied intervention of Jesus Christ.

"Christ is no longer expected to come back," says John Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, England, in his book The New Reformation. "I believe," continues Bishop Robinson, "that we must designate ours a post-Christian era, in the sense that a Christ is no longer expected. The present generation is unable to recognize Jesus as the Christ. They ask why should we see in this historical character the focus of all our hopes or the answer to all our problems?"

Notice that your Bible predicted this time of scoffers!

1. What did the Apostle Peter say would signal the "last days"? 2 Peter 3:3-4.

COMMENT: "Scoffers" is rendered "mockers" in the Moffatt translation.

2. Does God address a rebuke against such skepticism, especially to Israel? Ezekiel 12:21-23.

COMMENT: Surprising as it may seem, this prophecy and the entire book of Ezekiel were written primarily for our day! When this book was written, the nation of Israel (not to be confused with the modern nation of Israel) had already fallen and been taken into captivity—from which she never returned—a full 120 years before.

History reveals that the ten-tribed nation of Israel (the northern kingdom) was taken captive by the Assyrians in 721-718 B.C. However, by the time God spoke this prophecy to Ezekiel, about 600 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was attacking the Southern kingdom of Judah. Ezekiel was already in a Babylonian slave camp (Ezekiel 1:1), far from the regions where Israel had been carried by Assyria so long before. He was even farther from where some Israelites had subsequently migrated. (Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's book, The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy, explains where they went, and who ancient Israel's descendants really are today.)

God gave Ezekiel a message to be delivered to Israel—a message about a future captivity. Yet Israel had already gone into its first and only captivity 120 long years before! Ezekiel's captors would not allow him to go to Israel to deliver that message. God knew he would not be able to go, before He gave him the prophecy. So, plainly, God did not expect the message to be delivered then and there. But Ezekiel wrote the message so it would be preserved. And it is today in the hands of the people to whom it was sent—at precisely the time when God intended that they receive it!

3. Does God say that the doubters' proverb would prove worthless, and that the time would come when every vision would be fulfilled? Ezekiel 12:23,Ezekiel 12:25. What is the prophecy the modern-day descendants of Israel do not want to believe? Ezekiel 12:20.

COMMENT: The people say time has already been so long that it is obvious the vision will never come to pass. God's answer is that everything prophesied will happen as predicted!

4. Even if people admit the fact that this calamity will come to pass, how do they try to rationalize it away? Ezekiel 12:27. Does God answer there will be no reprieve from this sentence? Ezekiel 12:28.

5. Before God sends major punishment upon a nation, does He always first reveal it to His servants? Amos 3:6-7.

6. Hosea 5:9 calls the end time the "day of rebuke." Does Hosea 5:8-9 indicate an end-time warning ministry to the nations of Israel? Compare these verses with Hosea 7:12.

7. For what age was Isaiah's prophecy primarily put in writing? Isaiah 30:8.(The better rendering of "time to come" is "the latter day," as given in the margin of many Bibles.) What does God say will be the character of people in "the latter day"? Isaiah 30:9-11. Then will their punishment come

suddenly, though obvious signs had previously been visible? Isaiah 30:13.

8. Is one of the signs of the imminence of dire calamity the world’s tendency to ignore and deny the peril? 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

9. What message does Isaiah give the mockers? Isaiah 28:22.Does God warn them of great destruction upon the whole earth? Same verse. Is it linked with the time of God’s intervention in world affairs? Isaiah 28:21.

Prophecy Has NOT Failed!

Let’s understand once and for all that prophecy has not failed. We need to realize that every prophecy has a definite time setting, a time usually not in the prophet’s own day. One full third of the Bible is prophecy—and about 90% of all that prophecy still pertains to this prophesied "end time"! With this in mind, let’s notice certain KEY prophecies:

1. Was Joel’s prophecy for his own day, or for the distant future? Joel 1:2-3,Joel 1:15. What is the "day of the Lord"? Is it the time when God intervenes in world affairs? Joel 3:1-2,Joel 3:11-14. When will this period of time occur—after great signs in the heavens? Joel 3:15-16. Is this plainly speaking of the time Christ will return? Matthew 24:29-31.

COMMENT: The "day of the Lord" is mentioned in many prophecies of the Bible. It always refers to the time when God will intervene in world affairs, culminating in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

2. Did the prophet Isaiah also prophesy of this time? Isaiah 24:17-21.What will happen "in that day"? Isaiah 2:11-12.

3. Will all of the prophecies regarding the day of the Lord be fulfilled? Revelation 10:5-7.

4. Will any of the God-given prophecies FAIL to come to pass? Isaiah 55:11.Will the warning message given to the people by God’s servants be fulfilled? Ezekiel 33:30-33.Is it a pleasant message? Ezekiel 33:25-29.

COMMENT: Most people today are tired of hearing "bad news." Nevertheless, God’s prophecies include BAD NEWS for all those who rebel against Him and trample on His laws! But they also include much GOOD NEWS on beyond the prophesied time of world trouble and chaos (Isaiah 2:1-4;Micah 4:1-4). Many of the prophecies foretell a time of peace, of happiness, of restoration, of joy, of great prosperity and physical wealth for those who serve and OBEY God. We’ll learn more about this GOOD NEWS in a soon-coming lesson. The FIRST Thing Christ Foretold

1. What was the first warning sign Jesus Christ gave His disciples when they asked Him about the time of His second coming? Matthew 24:3-4.Did He foretell that MANY deceivers would arise to deceive MANY people? Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:11, Matthew 24:24. Are they the ministers of the archdeceiver himself? 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.Is the whole world deceived as a result of their activities? Revelation 12:9.

2. But would the TRUTH of God also be proclaimed with power around the world before the second coming of Christ? Matthew 24:14.

COMMENT: God will not leave the world without a warning witness. Today, His servants are powerfully proclaiming His truth worldwide via the media of radio, television and the printing press. You are studying His message right now, as you study your Bible with this Correspondence Course.

3. In the meantime, would the deceivers become extremely active? 2 Timothy 3:13.Would men have only a "form"—an outward show—of godliness? 2 Timothy 3:5. Wasn't Paul clearly speaking of these "last days"—our perilous age? 2 Timothy 3:1.

4. Did Jesus predict that some of the false teachers would even claim He has already returned? Matthew 24:23-26.

COMMENT: As we'll see in the next lesson, there will not be the slightest doubt that Christ has returned when His second coming really does occur! When Will Christ Return?

Perhaps you have heard preachers declare: "The Lord may come tonight. "But, is it true the second coming of Jesus Christ could occur at any minute? What did He Himself say Jesus warned: "Take heed that ye be not deceived"!

1. What is one of the deceits the false ministers would preach? Luke 21:8.Notice the words "the time draweth near."

COMMENT: According to the original Greek in which the New Testament was written, the false message of those pretending to be the ministers of Christ is: "The time HAS COME near," or "The time is at hand" (RSV). In other words, "The Lord may come tonight."

What about it, then? Could Christ return at any moment? Your Bible teaches that there is a definite sequence of events which must occur first! Study carefully ALL of Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:1-38. These chapters clearly reveal that there is a time-table of prophecy—that certain definite events must occur before Christ returns!

2. Did Christ explain clearly that certain events would have to take place before the "end"? Luke 21:9-11.

COMMENT: Notice that the King James English of 1611 is not at all clear in Luke 21:9. Instead of "by and by," the original Greek phrase is better translated "immediately." Parallel accounts in Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7 correctly answer "the end is not yet."

3. But once the terrible events Jesus enumerated in Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:1-38 finally begin to occur, will they all be completed in the lifetime of one generation? Matthew 24:34;Mark 13:30;Luke 21:32. The "Signs of the Times"

There is a parallel to the widespread lack of understanding of God's prophetic timetable for the return of Jesus Christ. The Jews at the time of His first coming also lacked understanding and did not fully recognize or accept Christ as the prophesied Messiah.

Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that the "signs" accompanying His ministry should have been proof enough that He was the prophesied Christ. The Old Testament prophecies, with which they were thoroughly familiar, had predicted the exact time and manner of His appearance!

Yet they refused to believe Him!

1. What did these scoffing Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus to show them? Matthew 16:1.How did He answer them? Matthew 16:2-3.

COMMENT: The religious leaders of Christ's day didn't understand the "signs of the times." Yet they had been taught the Messiah was to come, for that very message was repeated in nearly every book of the Old Testament. In Matthew 16:3, Jesus showed them they could understand—if they really wanted to!

2. What additional sign—besides the plain Old Testament prophecies they already knew—did Jesus give? Matthew 16:4.What was the "sign of the prophet Jonas"? Matthew 12:39-40.

COMMENT: Atheists and agnostics scoff at the Biblical record of "Jonah and the whale." Nevertheless, Jesus told the Pharisees that He would be in His grave for the same length of time Jonah was in the great fish. This was to be the special "sign" to His generation that He really was the prophesied Christ!

3. Did that sign come to pass? Read Matthew 27:57-66Matthew 28:1-6.Notice especially Matthew 28:6.

COMMENT: Two women came to see the tomb where Christ had been laid. When they arrived, they found it empty. They were told that Christ had risen—"as he said"—after three days and three nights. The sign had come to pass!

Jesus proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that He was the prophesied Messiah and Savior of mankind! Might it be "Signs" of OUR Times?

1. As Jesus explained to His disciples the exact SEQUENCE OF EVENTS that would precede His intervention (Matthew 24:3-41), what else did He say would occur in the end time besides the coming of many false prophets? Matthew 24:6-7.

COMMENT: World War I commenced in 1914. Ever since, nation has continued to rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Just since World War II alone, there have been over 150 armed conflicts around the world! We are now merely in a lull between rounds two and three of World War!

2. Is famine one of the major signs indicating that Christ's intervention in world affairs is very near? Matthew 24:7.

COMMENT: The first decade or so after World War II, food production kept up with population in the underdeveloped countries. But the tables turned in 1958, a crucial year. From that time till this, the stork outraced and passed the plow. More and more had less and less to eat.

Since 1958 the crisis has generally grown worse. The first shocking blow came in 1965-1966 with severe drought and threatening famine in India.

Disaster was barely staved off in 1966. What will happen the next year the world faces drought and famine? Remember: every year world population grows another 70 million. Every three years the equivalent of another United States is added to the world's population! Many areas of the world

face a severe crisis as population passes food production. In Central and South America, some of the most miserable and depressing poverty can be seen. Yet, in several of these nations the population is expected to double within 25 years! This was once thought to be impossible. The facts of lagging world food production, combined with the reality of the population explosion, add up to one thing: a crisis of awesome proportions is exploding on the world's doorstep! The several million dying each year now from starvation could soon be multiplied a hundred times. Hundreds of millions of human beings now drawing breath could perish in world-girdling famines! It is not at all a pleasant thought to contemplate. As one writer put it, "We shall see them doing so on our television sets." But worse, even our affluent nations are not immune to this dire threat!

Killer Diseases—Global Pandemics

1. What else was prophesied to occur after famine? Matthew 24:7.Isn't pestilence partly the natural result of food shortage?

COMMENT: The way is already prepared for a revival of pestilence. More and more crowding means more waste and refuse, more garbage, more pollution of the water, air and land. And more disease!

Huge concentrations of population are ready-made tinder boxes of potential disease epidemics. Under crowded conditions, an epidemic can spread from person to person like wildfire. All the great pestilences of the past were just such contagious diseases.

It is not inconceivable that a flu epidemic similar to the one in 1918 could strike. Despite medical science, disease germs, bacteria and viruses have built up an amazing resistance to the "wonder drugs" of a few years ago. Through mutation and adaptation, their resistance to man's drugs and vaccines is becoming even greater. It is very possible that a super-flu or other deadly pestilence could sweep the world, killing millions!

Remember also that modern man already lives in an environment of poisons. He inhales poisonous, polluted air, drinks contaminated water, and eats pesticide-laden foods. The inevitable result is that the heart, lungs and the entire body in general are weakened, thus lowering resistance to disease, which nearly always strikes the weakest first!

Jesus Christ told the truth bluntly, plainly, without equivocation. He said the world would experience vast disease epidemics in the end time!

Medical experts are growing increasingly alarmed when they study the world situation. They see growing signs of such epidemics. Plagues of cholera have already struck East Europe, Asia and Africa. Even bubonic plague—the "Black Death" of the Middle Ages—is making a comeback today!

Dr. Paul Ehrlich, studying the population explosion in the world today, drew a picture of what could very easily occur in the future. In one of his seemingly prophetic scenarios, he foretold the dire possibility of vast disease pandemics taking multiple millions of lives as a new, drug-resistant strain of some major disease broke out and quickly spread around the world!

Such a possibility frightens medical authorities because it is NOT mere "science-fiction." With the advent of huge jetliners and the tremendous intercontinental air and ship traffic of our age, such

diseases could be spread around the world very quickly!

Jesus' words, spoken over 1900 years ago, were certainly prophetic. The next few years will reveal precisely how much so!

Earthquakes!

1. What else will happen with increasing severity? Matthew 24:7.When earthquake activity reaches a peak, will men at last begin to recognize that GOD is intervening? Isaiah 2:19-21.

2. Are the signs Jesus foretold only the beginning of sorrows? Matthew 24:8.If this prophesied time of world trouble were allowed to continue, would there be anyone left alive? Matthew 24:21-22.

COMMENT: Famine, disease, pestilence, earthquakes and other disruptions of nature are taking an increasing toll of human life today. And as we have seen, world leaders everywhere are afraid that man 's destructive capability will annihilate all life on earth! The "Four Horsemen" in Revelation

1. Doesn't Revelation 6:1-17 picture the same conditions Jesus described in Matthew 24:1-51, but in symbolic terms? Revelation 6:2-8.

COMMENT: These four horses and horsemen represent the four major world conditions Jesus said would exist at the end of this age—all increasing in severity and overlapping in their effects on the entire world! The white horse represents the increasing number of false ministers preaching a false Christ and false ways to "salvation." The red horse pictures the increasing tempo of the ravages of wars. The black horse— increasing famine. And the pale horse—rampaging diseases.

2. What tremendous toll of life will be taken by these "four horsemen of the Apocalypse"? Revelation 6:8.

COMMENT: Just imagine, if you can, ONE-FOURTH of mankind dying during a period described as only the BEGINNING of sorrows!! But let's not forget that man is bringing this horrible suffering and death upon himself! Jesus knew that man, left to his own devices, would so afflict himself and would ultimately destroy all life—unless something totally unforeseen occurred to stop it. That is why He has promised to intervene in world affairs. Jesus Christ is coming soon to rescue us from ourselves because man has just about reached the end of his rope! The "Abomination of Desolation"

1. What was another sign Jesus gave to indicate when "the end" was near? Matthew 24:14-16.

2. Did Jesus identify the "abomination of desolation" as that one which was spoken of by the Prophet Daniel? Matthew 24:15.

3. What was Daniel told about a desolating abomination? Daniel 12:11.Would it exist in the end time? Verses Daniel 12:4, Daniel 12:9.

COMMENT: Notice that this abomination is something which occurs in the vicinity where sacrifices are being made.

4. Where else does Daniel mention an "abomination of desolation"? Daniel 11:31.

COMMENT: Daniel 11:31 was once fulfilled in ancient history. Most Bible scholars concede that most of the eleventh chapter of Daniel was fulfilled in history by the struggles of the Seleucidae of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt—called the kings of the North and the South by Daniel.

Daniel 11:31 was once fulfilled when Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple of God was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, in 168 B.C. (See Rawlinson's A Manual of Ancient History.)

5. But Jesus said the "abomination" was still future, didn't He? Matthew 24:15;Mark 13:14;Luke 21:20-24,especially Luke 21:20.

COMMENT: Then at least a part of Daniel 11:1-45 must also be DUAL! And no wonder, for we find the chapter concludes with the "time of the end" (Daniel 11:40)--leading up to the resurrection of the saints (Daniel 12:2). (In the original text, there is no chapter break between Daniel 11:1-45; Daniel 12:1-13.) But what is the "abomination of desolation" prophesied for the "time of the end"?

Putting Bible prophecy and historical fulfillment together, we can get an idea of what this abomination of desolation will be. Historically, the abomination of desolation occurred when Antiochus Epiphanes moved against Jerusalem with his armies. The latter-day fulfillment occurs when invading armies are again set up against Jerusalem (Luke 21:20). These armed forces will then crush and spoil the city (verse 24), stopping whatever daily sacrifice may be instituted by the Israelis. These actions by the brutal occupying armies will be a great abomination for the entire city and cause the desolation thereof. The modern "abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15), or "that maketh desolate" (Daniel 12:11), therefore will be vicious and catastrophic troubles caused by invading armies in Jerusalem. Will there be Sudden Destruction!

1. Will there he warfare at the same time in the Middle East? Luke 21:23-24.Will the city of Jerusalem be captured? Verse 24; Zechariah 14:1-2.By whom? Same verses.

COMMENT: Some have wondered if Jerusalem's destruction by the Gentile Roman armies in 70 A.D. was the fulfillment of this prophecy. The presence of Roman armies in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was only a type of what is to occur in the near future. The Roman legions which conquered Jerusalem then were only a type of MODERN legions which will soon again surge through the Middle East.

A.D. 70 was not "the END"! The "day of the Lord" did not arrive then!

2. Will half of Jerusalem's population eventually be carried away and the whole city looted? Zechariah 14:2.Will this time be especially hard on women? Same verse.

COMMENT: This is why Jesus warned "WOE" to pregnant and nursing women (Matthew 24:16-19). It will be very difficult for them to escape!

3. Will this future military action in the Middle East threaten to engulf the whole world? Matthew 24:21-22.Will this time of "great tribulation" that ensues—this time of unequaled strife and bloodshed involving weapons of modern warfare—threaten to utterly extinguish all life on earth? Matthew 24:22.

COMMENT: This is the very time Jesus Christ must intervene. Never before in man's history has he been able to destroy all life on this planet. These prophecies can only refer to this latter day and the immediate future!

World's Population being reduced

1. Does the Bible prophesy a great future war? Revelation 9:14-18.How many will die in this terrible conflict? Verse Revelation 9:15, Revelation 9:18.

COMMENT: Horrible as it sounds, the millions who died in World War II will be as nothing compared to the enormous decimation of human life just ahead! Roughly one-third of the human race will die in this war. And remember, this death toll is in addition to the number of others who will die of famine and disease!

2. What will happen to the armies that attack Jerusalem? Zechariah 14:12;Revelation 19:19-21.

3. In summary, what does Isaiah prophesy concerning the earth's population when Christ returns? Isaiah 24:1,Isaiah 24:3. Why? Isaiah 24:5-6. What is the number of the "few" people still alive compared to? Isaiah 24:13; Isaiah 17:4-6.

"Watch You Therefore . . ."

1. Will Christ's coming catch most people unawares—their minds completely occupied with their own problems, hopes, fears and pleasures—even in the midst of the most terrible times the world has ever known? Matthew 24:37-39.

2. Does Christ therefore warn us to take heed and carefully watch for the signs of His imminent return? Luke 21:34-36.

COMMENT: Jesus plainly shows us that we must watch world events in order to ESCAPE the trouble mankind is bringing upon itself—lest we be snared by it and unprepared for His coming.

3. Will the events—the "signs"—preceding Christ's intervention be difficult to discern? Or will they be as obvious (to those who are watching) as the changing as the seasons? Compare Luke 21:29-31 with Matthew 24:32-33.

COMMENT: Are you watching carefully the step-by-step fulfillment of Biblical prophecies on the world scene? Are you taking diligent heed to Jesus' words of warning ? May God help you to do so! Is it true that God MUST Intervene? When we take a hard, cold, realistic look at present world conditions and trends, they DO point to a fast-approaching WORLD CRISIS of war, starvation, uncontrollable disease epidemics, and the extinction of human life on this planet!

Man simply has no solutions to these terrifying problems! The further he goes, the more destructive become his efforts. His technology has gotten out of hand—beyond his capacity to control wisely.

World leaders, statesmen, and scientists look at this terrifying world picture and admit they are frightened! They warn us that man's only hope lies in the formation of a SUPER WORLD GOVERNMENT wielding all authority and power over the nations. But the nations, hostile against one another, could never form such a government.

Let’s face it! Either there does exist a living GOD of supreme mind and total POWER who very soon will step in and intervene in the affairs of this world to SAVE HUMANITY FROM ITSELF—or else the EXTINCTION of all life will inevitably occur, sooner or later, as man unleashes the awesome forces at his control upon his neighbor! The next lesson show exactly how God will intervene in this world’s affairs to save mankind alive!

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished this test, check your choices with the correct answers listed at the end of the test, and then rate yourself.

1. World statesmen warn of A. impending world catastrophe through warfare. B. world government. C. shortage of armaments. D. under-population.

2. Which of the following is not a threat to human survival? A. Nuclear annihilation. B. Over-population. C. Pestilence. D. Conventional weapons.

3. Biological weapons A. have been proven safe to the user if handled with caution. B. are more expensive that nuclear weapons. C. could render an attacked nation uninhabitable for 100 years. D. are entirely predictable as to effects.

4. What is man’s greatest need in this time of world trouble? A. More time to control pollution. B. More sophisticated weapons of warfare. C. Effective birth-control methods now. D. "A strong hand from someplace."

5. Jesus Christ A. could return tonight. B. gave a sequence of events that must occur before He returns. C. predicted man will annihilate human life. D. predicted none of today’s conditions.

6. God’s general timetable of prophecy A. is not clearly revealed in the Bible B. is either ignored or declared already fulfilled by most ministers. C. has apparently been revised. D. is something we were not meant to understand.

7. Awesome famines are certain to come A. because food production is being outpaced by population growth. B. because too many nations possess deserts. C. only because weather is unpredictable. D. only to India and certain other "poor" countries.

8. Can pestilence—disease—again bring death to multiple millions in this modern world? A. Wonder drugs and better medical practices make that impossible. B. Not with vaccinations and serum immunization. C. Yes, because our polluted environment weakens man’s natural resistance, while helping to create strains of super germs. D. Possibly, but the sick could be quickly isolated.

9. The "beginning of sorrows" will actually kill A. few hundred thousand. B. only the atheists. C. only professing Christians. D. at least one-fourth of mankind!

10. Christ’s second coming A. can be accurately pinpointed. B. will catch a few people by surprise. C. will not surprise those who watch world events and are prepared for His coming. D. is being proclaimed by all of professing Christianity today.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. The reason so many prophecies apply to the end time is because they did not come to pass when they were meant to. T F 12. There have been over 150 armed conflicts in the world just since the end of World War II. T F

13. The "abomination of desolation" does not have anything to do with armies at the "time of the end." T F 14. Half of Jerusalem’s population is yet to be taken captive in war. T F 15. The twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah shows that no human being will survive the prophesied time of world war. T F Match the number phrase with a letter phrase.

16. Latin America

A. Population to double in 25 years.

B. Already fulfilled

17. Signs of our times.

C. Matthew 25:1-46; Luke 22:1-71

D. Revelation 6:1-17

18. Ezekiel

E. Matthew 24:1-51

F. Prophet of Israel

19. Earthquakes

G. Prophet to Judah

H. False prophets

20. Four Horsemen

I. Religious persecution

J. Greatest to come

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-A 5-B 9-D 13-F 17-E 19-20 correct - - - excellent 2-D 6-B 10-C 14-T 18-F 16-18 correct - - - good 3-C 7-A 11-F 15-F 19-J 13-15 correct - - - fair 4-D 8-C 12-T 16-A 20-D

BCC Index

Lesson 03

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 3 The Sensational Return of Jesus Christ! When and where will Christ return? Will He come quietly, or will the whole world know? Has He already returned secretly? Here is the amazing truth about the SECOND COMING of Jesus Christ! NO NEWS STORY could be more shocking. No headline could be more spectacular than: JESUS CHRIST RETURNS! ...or more ridiculed today. To the average person, the idea of Jesus Christ returning to earth is a fantastic fable that has no bearing whatsoever on the realities of life.

Yet millions of professing Christians still expect the second coming of Christ—though widely divided among themselves as to why, when and how He will appear. The Promise of Christ's Return

Just before His death and resurrection—before His departure from the Mount of Olives over 1900 years ago—Jesus Christ promised, "I will come again" (John 14:3). And only moments after His ascension, the apostles were startled by the appearance of two divine messengers who assured them: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). They confirmed Jesus' promise that He would come again and told the manner of His return. The early New Testament Church believed what Jesus said, and taught His message to others. Notice what Edward Gibbon said about the early church in his famous history, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:

"The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed at six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection" (Gibbon, vol. II, page 546, 1899 edition, emphasis ours throughout lesson). But the truth was gradually rejected!

Gibbon goes on to show that the fact Jesus would come a second time to intervene in world affairs came to be regarded as an error. Within a century and a half after Christ's ascension, it was treated as a profound allegory—not to be taken literally. The doctrine that Christ would return to rule the earth "was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism" (ibid., p.547). The world today continues to ridicule the idea of Christ's return. Nevertheless, this message lies at the very heart and core of the true gospel of the Kingdom of God!

Three Common Ideas

Among the millions of professing Christians, who still expect the second coming of Christ, there are hundreds of differing concepts about the time and manner of His return. The three principal ideas are the "Post-millennial Coming," the "Secret Rapture," and the "Spiritual Coming."

It was not until about 1700 A.D. that an English clergyman put forward the idea that Christ's second coming would follow the Millennium—the time during which His Kingdom was prophesied to rule the earth. But those who maintain this idea are finding it increasingly difficult to believe that modern man can ever achieve worldwide peace and prosperity without the intervention of Christ's "strong hand" (Isaiah 40:10).

Man is now literally on the brink of blasting or polluting himself—and all earthly life—from the face of this planet! That fact alone should tell us why—and partly WHEN—Christ must return. The "Secret Rapture" The second common idea accepted by millions of professing Christians is the "Secret Rapture." According to this belief, Jesus will return to this earth in two phases. First, He will return secretly to whisk away all true Christians to heaven to protect them from "The Great Tribulation." Therefore, it is believed that the Church's promised place of safety is not on this earth, but up in heaven. The second phase is believed to be His "public" coming at which time all will be able to see and hear Him. But the rapture theory is actually an even more modern invention than the post-millennial theory. The early New Testament Church of God never heard of it. Nor indeed had anyone else until about 1830, when it was espoused by a few people in Britain and later popularized in the famous Scofield Reference Bible.

Those first few advocates of the rapture theory fervently believed that they were living in the last three and one half years of earth's history. When that length of time was exceeded and Christ still had not "caught them away," they were forced to alter their doctrine to a general expectancy that Christ might return—unannounced—at any moment! From those few people the doctrine of the "Secret Rapture" has spread to nearly all Protestantism. Is Christ Already Here? The third common idea is that Christ has already returned. Many assume that Jesus came the second time as the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. His Kingdom was the Church He founded at that time, say the proponents of this theory, and therefore today all the churches together constitute the "Kingdom of God." But such a kingdom would not fulfill dozens of plain prophecies. Also, this theory ignores the fact that the Apostle Paul and other early true Christians still looked forward to the second coming of Christ and His Kingdom long after that particular Pentecost! What is the TRUTH?

Let's begin to prove the facts about Jesus Christ's dramatic return with our own eyes... in our Bibles!

LESSON 3 Has Christ Already Come?

Let's notice the warnings of Christ Himself concerning His promised return. 1. Did Jesus warn that some would claim He had already come before His true return would take place? Matthew 24:26;Mark 13:21.

2. Did false teachers proclaim that very idea after His resurrection? 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.(The King James rendering, "is at hand," in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 is misleading. Other translations render this more accurately as "has come.") Did the Apostle Paul emphatically refute this false assumption? 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

3. Did Paul go on to warn that there must yet come a further falling into error—an apostasy from the truth—before the return of Jesus Christ? Same verse. Did Jesus also speak of this as something that had to occur before He returned? Compare Matthew 24:5,Matthew 24:11, Matthew

24:24 with Revelation 6:2.

COMMENT: Jesus, the Revelator (Revelation 1:1), used the symbol of a rider on a white horse to picture false ministers and prophets claiming to represent Christ or His Church. The real Christ comes on the white horse described in Revelation 19:11.Notice that Christ pictures Himself as returning with a sword—the Word of God (Revelation 19:15;Hebrews 4:12)--whereas the devil's counterfeit is pictured with a bow in his hand (Revelation 6:2).

Notice, too, that the perversion of God's truth marks only the beginning of a long sequence of events (covering over 1900 years) culminating in Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

4. Before His resurrection, did Jesus make it clear that His Kingdom was not at that time, nor ever would be, "of this world"? John 18:36.Therefore, could any or all of the churches of this world constitute God's Kingdom, as so many seem to think? Same verse.

COMMENT: This "world" or system (Greek cosmos) encompasses all that is characteristic of the age of man. And certainly, as history reveals, the churches are a PART of this age! They have engaged in political struggles, ruled empires, caused the shedding of much blood, especially in the Middle Ages. Therefore, if the churches of Christendom constitute God's Kingdom, then that kingdom IS a part of this world, and Jesus didn't know what He was talking about!

Jesus stated plainly: "But now is my KINGDOM not from hence" [did not begin at that time]--though His spiritual CHURCH (Matthew 16:18)did begin on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). So Jesus Christ Himself emphatically denied, in advance, the false concept that later formed the basis for church-political dominance in the Middle Ages.

5. When asked by His disciples if He would restore the Kingdom in their day, what did Jesus reply? Acts 1:6-8.But were they shortly to receive power that was NOT of a political nature? Acts 1:8. What were they to do with this power? Same verse and Matthew 28:18-20.

COMMENT: Notice that the apostles were not given to know the time of the establishment of the Kingdom, but were to be filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Jesus' disciples did not at that time receive political power to rule the nations. The Kingdom of God was not then to be set up. But they were to receive spiritual power that would enable them to be "WITNESSES" to the world of Christ's resurrection, and to "teach all nations" the ways of God.

While Jesus Himself was AWAY IN HEAVEN, He promised He would be with them (and their successors) in spirit only until the end of this age—until the end of this present world of human misrule—until His return to set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

6. What scripture proves conclusively that the Kingdom of God could not have been established on earth yet? 1 Corinthians 15:50.Would you say the people attending the various churches are still flesh and blood? When Christ WON'T Return

Another and more modern concept is that Jesus will come AFTER peace and harmony permeates the earth for a thousand years, with all the nations in perfect accord. Could this possibly be true in the light of the Scriptures? 1. What does Acts 3:21 tell us concerning the restoration of all things?

2. When Jesus returns, what will the ambassadors of peace be doing, and what will the general condition of the earth be like? Isaiah 33:7-8.

COMMENT: Obviously the earth will be in utter CHAOS—not at peace- before Christ returns!

3. What scriptures prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that Christ returns before, and not after, peace and harmony fill the earth for a thousand years? Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:4.COMMENT: Your Bible shows that Christ will not come after a millennium (1000 years) of perfect human rule. To abolish human misrule and establish the Kingdom—the rule—of God, is the reason Jesus returns a second time. Since resurrected Christians will reign with Christ for a thousand years, He obviously must come before the thousand years commence!

End-Time Commission Must First Be Fulfilled

1. Before His crucifixion, did Jesus' followers anticipate that the Kingdom of God would be established very soon? Luke 19:11.What did Jesus say in answer to this mistaken idea? Luke 19:12.

COMMENT: In this parable the "nobleman" refers to Jesus. The "far country" is heaven, to which He returned after His resurrection, and the "servants" are true Christians.

2. Will Christ receive a kingdom while away in heaven? Compare Luke 19:12 with Daniel 7:13-14.

COMMENT: Plainly, the parable in Luke 19:1-48 covers the time from Christ's ascension to heaven (the "far country") until His return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

3. While the nobleman—Christ—is away, must the servants become profitable by increasing their talents? Luke 19:13,Luke 19:15; Matthew 25:15-19.

4. What duty must the servants—true Christians—especially fulfill before the end of this age and the second coming of Christ? Matthew 24:14;Matthew 28:18-20.

COMMENT: Jesus made it plain that the gospel of the Kingdom must go to all nations before His coming! Can We Know the Exact Time?

Shortly before His ascension to heaven, Jesus also made it very plain that He would return after a fixed sequence of events. He gave an outline of these events to His disciples upon the Mount of Olives. In Lesson 2 we studied that outline as it is recorded in Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:1-38. You should reread Matthew 24:1-51 and note all the events which were prophesied to occur before Christ returns. Can we really determine from these prophecies the exact time of His coming? Let's see:

1. Will God's intervention in world affairs and the second coming of Christ be universally expected? Luke 21:35.

2. To what period in earth's history did Jesus compare His return? Matthew 24:37.Did the people before the Deluge really expect God's supernatural intervention? Matthew 24:38-39. Will people today expect God's intervention and the second coming of Christ? Matthew 24:37-29.

3. Will those who are watching and preparing know the day and hour of Christ's return? Matthew 25:13.

COMMENT: These utterances of Jesus have often been taken to mean that only the apostles would not know the day or the hour, but that we in these last days would know it. This is emphatically NOT true! Notice:

4. Did Peter ask Jesus if He meant only the apostles would be unable to know the day or the hour, or if He meant all—even those of us today—would not know? Luke 12:40-41.What was Jesus' reply? Luke 12:42-43. Is Jesus' warning especially for the generation—those alive "when he comes"? Notice again Jesus' reply in Luke 12:43.

COMMENT: How plain that Jesus' meant His servants of this generation would NOT know the day or the hour!

5. Since we cannot know the day and hour, can we nevertheless know very nearly the actual time of His return? Matthew 24:32-33.

COMMENT: Recall that Jesus had already given in this chapter the signs that would precede His second coming.

How Christ Will Return

How will Christ return? Will He come silently, invisibly, as a "thief in the night?" Is He returning to secretly "rapture" away His Church? Is Christ coming in two phases—once "for" His saints to secretly take them to heaven—and then "with" them to set up His Kingdom? The Bible gives us the clear, concise answers.

1. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 say is to come on the world as a "thief in the night"? Are Christians to be vigilant so this period of upheaval--the "day of the Lord"—doesn't catch them unawares? 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6.

2. And yet is Christ also pictured as coming as a "thief"? Revelation 16:15.Does this mean He will return secretly—invisibly—in a clandestine manner?

COMMENT: That's a fair question. But here's another question to ponder: When thieves or burglars rob a home, do they come INVISIBLY? Of course not! A thief, however, usually comes at night when the household is away or asleep. He catches them unaware, off their guard—SURPRISES them! You never know WHEN a thief is coming. If you did, you would call the police and be prepared for him. The big question you would want answered if you already knew a thief was planning to rob your home would be when. So it is with the coming of Christ! He will not come invisibly—any more than a thief comes invisibly. But He will come UNEXPECTEDLY! No one will know exactly when He is going to come.

Jesus Himself explained: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also READY; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:42-44). And so Jesus likened His coming to a "thief" in respect to the time of His coming and the element of SURPRISE! How plain!

3. Now turn to Matthew 24:1-51. Does Jesus describe a tremendous noise which will rend the air at His coming? Matthew 24:30-31.Isn't this the time when He "gathers together his elect"? Matthew 24:31.

4. Will Christ's return from heaven also be accompanied by a tremendous shout? 1 Thessalonians 4:16.Is this the time the saints are "caught up" to be with Him? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

COMMENT: Obviously Christ's coming will NOT be a clandestine, secretive event at all! To Come VISIBLY!

1. When Christ returns, will He be visible to everyone? Matthew 24:27;Revelation 1:7.

COMMENT: The Greek word astrape used in Matthew 24:27 may mean the lightning of thunderstorms, or any brilliant illumination. Now what brilliant light "comes out of the east and shines even unto the west"? Why, the SUN, Of course! Can you see the sun? Of course you can! Christ's presence will be "as the SUN Shineth in his strength" (Revelation 1:16). It will be obvious—nobody will be able to miss it. The expression, "and they also which pierced him" in Revelation 1:7 does not prove that the ONE Roman soldier who literally pierces Jesus' side, or the Jews who were living then, will be alive at His coming. It actually refers to the entire human family—YOU AND ME! Our sins took His life (Zechariah 12:10). Revelation 1:7 simply shows that all who are alive when He returns will be able to see Him. And all the rest of humanity will see Him later, when they are resurrected.

2. Did the angelic messenger who spoke to the disciples right after Christ's ascension from the Mount of Olives affirm that He would return "IN LIKE MANNER" as He left? Acts 1:10-11.What was the manner of His leaving?--was He "seen" until He disappeared in the clouds? Acts 1:9. Will He at His return again become visible "in the clouds"? 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

3. Finally, what does Zechariah 14:4 have to say about Christ's return to that same Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, from which He ascended? Then He will not make a "near miss" and turn right around and go back to heaven for three and one half or seven years, will He? Obviously not!

COMMENT: Christ's visible, advertised, unmistakable coming is plainly described in the Bible—in great detail—but there is not one word mentioning a secret, preliminary "rapture" of Christians to heaven!

Only ONE "Second Coming"!

Some will still contend that this visible and audible coming is the second phase of Christ's return. Here is more proof that this idea is utterly false!

1. Does the resurrection of the dead in Christ clearly take place at His return? 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16.Does it occur at the exact moment the trumpet ("trump") mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 blows? 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

2. Is the trumpet mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 the same as the one blown in Revelation 11:15?Revelation 11:18.COMMENT: Some will claim that, the last trumpet mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is different from the seventh or last trump mentioned in Revelation 11:15.But notice in Revelation 11:18 that John was inspired to write that the seventh

trump is the time of the resurrection!

John is describing the same momentous event Paul did in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. Thus we see that Christ will return and the saints will be resurrected at the mighty blast of a great trumpet which will be heard by all the earth!

Significance of the Greek Word "Parousia"

Those who insistently adhere to the rapture theory claim the Greek word parousia, translated "coming" in Matthew 24:27,does not mean "coming" at all. They say it refers to His "secret nearness," so that when Jesus' disciples asked Him for the "sign" of His coming, they were actually asking for a sign of the "rapture." What about it? The scriptures we have studied already have clearly shown the manner and approximate time of Christ's return. But what about this word parousia? Does it really indicate a preliminary SECRET coming after all? 1. The Greek word parousia (number 3952 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible) is translated "coming" in many different scriptures. 1 Thessalonians 3:13 is one example. Does this verse say that Christ's parousia is "with" all His saints? Then could it possibly be referring to a secret coming FOR His saints three and one half or more years before He returns openly "with" them?

COMMENT: Wouldn't you think that after Christ had gone into such detail to answer the disciples' questions (Matthew 24:3), that He would have at least mentioned the "rapture" or His "invisible presence"? But no such mention is found in this chapter or in all the Bible!

2. But notice another scripture. At His "coming" (parousia), what will Christ do to "that Wicked [one]" who has seated himself "as God" in the temple of God? 2 Thessalonians 2:4,8.

COMMENT: Clearly, Christ's coming to execute judgment is His parousia- His visible and POWERFUL "coming" to this earth! Notice that not only does this verse show that the wicked one is to be destroyed at the parousia of Christ, but it also speaks of the BRIGHTNESS of His parousia. Plainly, the parousia of Christ is not a secret, clandestine, INVISIBLE event at all! Where Will Christians Be Protected From the Tribulation?

1. What did Jesus say is to happen shortly BEFORE His one and only second coming? Matthew 24:21,Matthew 24:29. And what happens next? Matthew 24:30.

COMMENT: Here we find that before Christ's coming a Great Tribulation is going to occur on earth. These verses show that Christ will not return until AFTER the Great Tribulation and AFTER great heavenly signs occur!

2. What did Christ tell His followers in Judea to do when they see a particular "abomination of desolation" set up? Matthew 24:15-20;Luke 21:20-21.

COMMENT: This is exactly what true Christians did before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. But this prophecy, remember, is DUAL. It also gives Christians in Judea at the end time instructions about what to do when the "abomination of desolation" is set up. If there were to be a "secret rapture," Christ's followers would not have to be concerned about either the winter or the Sabbath or invading armies!

3. Did Jesus believe in "rapturing" His followers out of the world to protect them? Or did He anticipate another means of protection—on the earth? John 17:15.

4. Does Christ promise to keep the overcomers of His Church safe in the "hour of temptation"—the coming Great Tribulation? Revelation 3:10.

5. A "woman" symbolizes a CHURCH (see 2 Corinthians 11:1-2;Ephesians 5:23-29;Galatians 4:26). Will God provide a place of safety for the end-time true Church where they will also be protected from the devil (the "dragon"—Revelation 12:9)? Revelation 12:14-16.Where will it be? Same verses.

COMMENT: Notice that the "earth" helps the "woman." No mention here of heaven, or of a rapture!

Obviously, then, the "saints"—true Christians of God’s Church—will be on the earth during the Great Tribulation—not up in heaven as proponents of the rapture theory believe! But Christ promises the "saints" a place of safety—on this earth. Take note, however, that not every Christian will have qualified himself for this protection, and many will have to go through that Tribulation! Who Returns With Christ? When Christ returns to the Mount of Olives in the same manner as He departed (Acts 1:11), He definitely will not be alone. Notice who will come with Him:

1. Will all the "saints" (true Christians) be with Jesus Christ when He returns to the Mount of Olives? Zechariah 14:4-5. Notice the last few words of Zechariah 14:5.

2. Did the Apostle Paul speak of Christ coming "with" His saints, who are now sleeping in death? 1 Thessalonians 3:13;1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.Do they return from heaven, or just from the atmosphere of the earth—the clouds into which they will have risen to meet Him? 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.

COMMENT: Both the resurrected dead in Christ and the living Christians (then made immortal) will not only rise to meet the returning Christ in the air, but will then come down immediately with Him to the earth.

3. Will they stay with Christ forever? 1 Thessalonians 4:17.Where will He be? Turn to Zechariah 14:4 and Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:4 once again.

4. Who else is scheduled to come with Christ at this time? Mark 8:38;Revelation 19:14.

COMMENT: When Christ came to the earth the first time He was scourged, mocked and abused (John 19:1-3). But when He returns as King of kings to set up the Kingdom of God, He will return with GREAT POWER AND GLORY (Matthew 24:30), and a great army of angels will accompany Him!

What Christ Will DO When We Returns

Jesus Christ came over 1900 years ago as a meek lamb to be slain for the sins of the world. But when He comes again, He will be wrathful—ANGRY --against all evil! He will use His mighty power to change the ways which have caused all the sorrow and suffering on earth.

1. What does Revelation 6:16-17 foretells concerning the time of God’s wrath on this world? Did Zephaniah foretell this same time? Zephaniah 1:14-15;Zephaniah 2:2-3.Turn also to Isaiah 13:6-7 and Ezekiel 7:19.

COMMENT: Most people have heard little or nothing about the "day of the Lord"—and yet the day of the Lord is described in more than 30 different prophecies scattered throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

2. At the very time when the last (the seventh) trumpet sounds (Revelation 11:15), and Christ returns, is God wrathful? Revelation 11:18.

COMMENT: The wrath of the "day of the Lord" manifests itself in the seven "trumpet" plagues which are unleashed consecutively over a period of months (Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 11:15-19)and culminates in the second coming of Christ and the administering of the seven last plagues (Revelation 15:1 and Revelation 16:1-21).

3. Is the great personage mentioned in Revelation 19:11 to make war? What is His title? Revelation 19:16. What else is He called? Revelation 17:14.Who is the "Lamb" of God? John 1:29.

COMMENT: These verses plainly show that Christ will come with an army of angels to punish and conquer the rebellious nations of the earth.

4. Exactly WHY will God have to punish mankind? Revelation 11:18,last few words, and Zephaniah 1:17.

COMMENT: Christ will be angry at the sins of mankind. To SAVE the human race ALIVE (Matthew 24:22), He is coming to punish in love! Otherwise, man would destroy all life upon the earth! For nearly 6.000 years God has given stubborn, rebellious, misguided human beings every chance to turn to His ways of peace and happiness. Instead, men have turned their backs on their Creator. They have REFUSED to follow the ways which would result in the fulfillment of their desires for peace. Men continue to devise forces which now threaten the annihilation of all life.

Therefore, as any loving parent punishes his child who will not listen to gentle admonition, God will have to punish this world to bring it to its senses! The glorified Christ is coming in all splendor, power and glory of God to STOP escalating wars, nuclear mass destruction, human pain and suffering. He is coming to usher in peace, abundant prosperity, happiness and JOY for all mankind.

5. Will the nations of the world also be angry at this time? See Revelation 11:18 once again.

COMMENT: This world doesn’t want to change. Man desperately wants to preserve the society he has established upon this earth. Men do not want God to intervene and teach them the way to world peace and prosperity. Instead, they want peace on their own terms—even though man’s ways to "peace" lead inevitably to more wars and eventually cosmocide. When Jesus Christ comes to stop world suicide, the nations will quickly drop their own quarrels. The joint military forces of the world will then turn their efforts against Christ and attempt to fight and destroy Him! The returning Christ will be forced to deal with the nations of this rebellious world in the only language they will understand—overwhelming force! What a paradox that men will at first have to be FORCED into trying the way of life that leads to happiness, prosperity and abundance!

What Is "Armageddon"?

"Armageddon" is a term associated with the wrath of God. Almost everyone has heard of it. World leaders and scientists frequently use this Biblical term when speaking of the inevitability of nuclear warfare, and the destruction of mankind. Yet few know what "Armageddon" really is! Like most other topics of Biblical prophecy, what is popularly taught about this subject has been generally accepted without question. And as with most other Biblical subjects, people have been turned away from the truth and led to embrace fables! When World War I broke out, many excitedly proclaimed "This is the Armageddon war!" Then a generation later many assumed that World War II was the war that would end with "Armageddon."

Now the commonly accepted idea is that "Armageddon" is the last battle of a coming war between the Western democracies and Communism. It supposedly will be a battle between atheistic Communism on the one side, attacking Jerusalem; with the British and American armies on the other side, defending it. And at the precise instant of this battle, it is believed, the second coming of Christ occurs. But is this really what Biblical prophecy foretells? You may be surprised at who will be fighting whom at Christ's coming, and where!

Make no mistake. World War III is on the way! World Wars I and II were merely small forerunners of the UTTER DESTRUCTION which will break suddenly upon the nations. This time it will be so hellish, only the second coming of Christ will be able to save mankind from extinction.

That's why God commands us to "WATCH" (Luke 21:36)--to watch world news so we may be AWARE of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and to be accounted worthy to ESCAPE the nuclear holocaust soon to fall upon this heedless, rebellious world!

1. In what is the wrath of God "filled up"? Revelation 15:1.

COMMENT: The seventh or last trumpet (Revelation 11:15)consummates—COMPLETES—God's wrath. How? By announcing the terrifying "seven last plagues"! The Moffatt translation renders the last part of Revelation 15:1:

"For they [the seven last plagues] complete the wrath of God."

2. What are these plagues of wrath compared to? Revelation 15:7.(Some translations use the word "bowl" instead of vial.) Upon what will they be poured? Revelation 16:1.Will they cause great suffering upon unrepentant men? Revelation 16:2-11.

COMMENT: Despite this severe punishment, the nations will adamantly refuse to repent of their sins!

3. What will occur when the sixth symbolic vial of God's wrath is poured out? Revelation 16:12.Notice from which direction these kings will come. What else happens at this time? Revelation 16:13-14, Revelation 16:16. Let's carefully analyze what is being depicted by these verses.

World's Armies Assemble

1. Against whom will the kings of the earth fight? Revelation 17:14.We have already seen that the "lamb" is Jesus Christ.

2. Who will incite the nations to fight against their Creator God? Revelation 16:13-14.Who is the dragon? Revelation 12:9.Are these "spirits" therefore Satan’s demons?

COMMENT: The word "devils" in the King James Version ought to be rendered demons. There is one fallen archangel (Isaiah 14:12-14;Ezekiel 28:12-17)called the "devil," but there are many fallen angels (Jude 1:6; Revelation 12:7)of lesser rank called "demons" in the Bible.

3. Are these demons responsible for gathering the armies of all nations together? Revelation 16:16.

COMMENT: At this time, the demons mentioned in Revelation 16:14 will stir up worldwide resistance to Christ. The proper translation of the inspired Greek of Revelation 16:16 should be as follow: "And THEY gathered them together..." This verse is sometimes rendered incorrectly "And he gathered them together..." Notice the battle is actually stirred up, not by men or nations alone, but by spirit demons of Satan the devil.

4. What will these evil spirits do to cause the armies to gather? Revelation 16:14.

COMMENT: Notice that these spirits directly influence the leaders of nations—deceiving them with miracles—stirring them to a fever-pitch of hatred to fight the new "invader from outer space"—Christ!

5. Exactly where do the devil’s demons cause the armies of the nations to be GATHERED TOGETHER in preparation for the great battle against Christ? Turn again to Revelation 16:16.Then where does the actual battle take place? Zechariah 14:2.

COMMENT: The nations will marshal their armies at a place called Armageddon. "Armageddon" is not an English word. Rather it comes from the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name Har Megiddo. (The Hebrew prefix "Har" means hill or mountain.)

Megiddo was a strong fortification dating from ancient times, situated approximately 55 miles north of Jerusalem. The mound that remains is a few miles south east of Haifa—a natural port and industrial center providing ideal facilities for landing troops. The ruins of Megiddo are located on the edge of the plain of Megiddo, an oval-shaped valley once called the Plain of Esdraelon, but now commonly called the Valley of Jezreel. It is a large flat area ideal for the assembling of military equipment and personnel. The Hill of Megiddo was strongly fortified as long ago as the days of King Solomon (1 Kings 9:15). It was a literal fortress rising above the surrounding plain. The fortress Hill Megiddo serves as a type, or forerunner, of the bristling armaments that shall soon envelope the whole surrounding area.

Historians have said that more battles have been fought in the Valley of Jezreel that anywhere else on earth. However, when Christ returns the armies will only gather here. From this natural staging area they will advance southward toward Jerusalem to fight against Him. The final battle will then take place in the environs of Jerusalem! The Great "Battle of God Almighty"

1. What is the name of the climactic battle that determines WHO will rule the earth? Revelation 16:14,last part.

COMMENT: The battle that ensues will reveal whether MAN or God shall rule the earth for the next thousand years. It is called the "Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty"—often incorrectly called the "Battle of Armageddon."

2. This battle is described in Revelation 19:11-21.Who shall fight whom?

Verses 14, 19. Will the U.S.S.R. and her Communist satellites fight against British and American armies, as so many have assumed? Or will it be the armies of a union of nations from the "east" (Revelation 16:12)And the armies of "the whole world"—many of them led by the symbolic "dragon," "beast" and "false prophet"—attempting to fight against Christ? Turn to Revelation 16:13-14 once again.

COMMENT: The nations, already engaged in an all-out struggle for world domination, will be angry and furious when they see a heavenly "invader" has come to intervene in human affairs. In a frenzy of rage, these nations will prepare to do battle with and attempt to destroy Christ and His armies!

3. Exactly where does the Bible say this battle will take place? Joel 3:1-2,Joel 3:9-14. Compare Joel 3:13 with Revelation 14:18-20;Revelation 19:15.

COMMENT: "Jehoshaphat" means "Judgment of Jehovah" [or more correctly, "Judgment of the Eternal."] (Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary). The focal point of the battle will be in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, also called the "valley of decision" in the Bible. This valley is a deep ravine having very steep sides. It borders the city of Jerusalem on the east. According to Unger’s Dictionary of the Bible, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which is situated between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, is now known as the "Kidron" Valley (page 564).

Zechariah 14:1-4 plainly says that Christ will fight earth’s hate-filled armies when He returns and stands upon the Mount of Olives, just east of Jerusalem and notice that Revelation 14:20 specifically states that the blood of these enemies—symbolically represented by the juice of grapes being pressed out in a winepress—will flow "without [outside] the city." There will be so much bloodshed that the blood will rise (in some places) as high as horses’ bridles!

Christ Is Coming Soon!

Awesome times are ahead. It may seem incredible, but Bible prophecy is very plain.

Through these first three lessons of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course you have seen that this IS indeed the very END TIME of Bible prophecy! You’ve seen that God, through His prophets, Apostles and servants, has revealed a sequence of events leading up to the dramatic return of Jesus Christ.

These events are as certain to occur as the rising and setting of the sun!

Therefore, you need to "watch" and "pray" (Luke 21:36). Be vigilant. Keep abreast of world news. Read The PLAIN TRUTH magazine. (It is free of charge, just as this course is free of tuition cost.) And by all means study your Bible and pray to God every day so you may be "accounted worthy to escape" the coming time of great world trouble!

You have clearly seen in your own Bible that Christ will come visibly, and with great POWER to a God-rejecting world to save it from itself. His dramatic coming will usher in the beginning of the Millennium--1,000 years of peace and prosperity for all mankind!

People will finally learn to lead brimful, happy and abundant lives under the righteous rule of Christ. Under His guidance and rulership the whole world will receive God’s abundant blessings. But more about that wonderful world tomorrow in the next lesson!

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished this test, check your choices with the correct answers listed at the end of the test, and then rate yourself.

1. The message about Christ’s coming to set up the Kingdom of God to rule this earth A. is the heart and core of the true Gospel. B. was simply a Jewish fable. C. originated as a heresy of the Gnostics. D. has no adherents today.

2. History proves that the early Church A. taught that the Church is the Kingdom B. believed the duty of Christians is to force Christianity on the world. C. did not expect Jesus to return. D. fervently believed in a coming millennium of peace preceded by the second coming of Christ.

3. Jesus Christ’s second coming A. was the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. B. was secret, probably in 1914. C. will occur after the Millennium. D. will begin the Millennium.

4. Jesus warned the world through the apostles that A. there would be a renewed fervor to learn the truth before His return. B. there would be those who would claim He had returned before He was supposed to. C. The "rapture" would occur. D. His return would be in two phases— first secretly, then publicly.

5. Christ’s return will be A. with the great noise of a trumpet and the loud voice of an archangel. B. quiet. C. as a "thief" to steal away His Church. D. just as most people expect.

6. The last trumpet, which signals the return of Jesus Christ, A. will be heard only by the saved. B. is not the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15.C. will be heard by the whole world. D. will be the signal for all nations to make peace.

7. Christ will come from heaven A. secretly. B. invisibly. C. without companions. D. with armies of angels to meet the resurrected saints in the air.

8. Christ’s coming will occur A. unexpectedly. B. unlike a "thief in the night." C. after a great revival in the churches. D. before the seventh trumpet sounds.

9. The Greek word parousia is NOT used in connection with Christ’s coming A. in destroying "brightness"— 2 Thessalonians 2:8.B. "with all His saints"— 1 Thessalonians 3:13.C. "As the lightning"— Matthew 24:27.D. In a secret, clandestine manner.

10. The "Secret Rapture" A. is a relatively modern concept. B. is Biblically provable. C. should be the "blessed hope" of all Christians in these last days. D. is believed in by very few people.

TRUE OR FALSE 11. The return of Jesus Christ will occur at the end of a definite series of prophesied events. T F 12. When Christ returns, the nations and their armies will surrender to Him at once. T F 13. The nations will be angry and at war when Christ returns. T F 14. "Armageddon" is the Biblical name of the climactic battle in which Christ will destroy His enemies. T F 15. The "seven last plagues" begins the wrath of God. T F Match Numbered Phrase with Lettered one

16. thief in the night

A. Last Trumpet

B. Defeated armies

17. Mount of Olives

C. Secret Rapture

D. Gather armies

18. Three demon spirits

E. Silently, invisibly

F. Where armies gather

19. Armageddon

G. USA vs USSR

H. Comes unexpectedly

20 Valley of Jehoshaphat

I. Where Christ returns

J. Nuclear annihilation

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-A 5-A 9-D 13-T 17-I 19-20 correct - - - excellent 2-D 6-C 10-A 14-F 18-D 16-18 correct - - - good 3-D 7-D 11-T 15-F 19-F 13-15 correct - - - fair 4-B 8-A 12-F 16-H 20-B

Lesson 04

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 4 The Coming Utopia... Wonderful World Tomorrow! For ages men have dreamed of a utopian paradise on earth.

Nations have struggled and millions have died in its quest. But utopia has eluded all the efforts of men. Why? Is utopia really possible? Are world peace and prosperity coming soon? Here are the surprising answers from your Bible! Five years after the close of World War II, Winston Churchill declared in a speech in Copenhagen, "Unless some effective world super-government can be brought quickly into action, the proposals for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful." In the early 1960s, noted nuclear physicist Edward Teller, who helped develop the hydrogen bomb, warned that "We must work for the establishment of a world authority sustained by moral and physical force—a world government capable of enforcing worldwide law." In 1970, U Thant, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, called for the establishment of a global authority with broad powers to deal with worldwide environmental problems. He remarked, "We need something new—and we need it speedily—a global authority with the support and agreement of governments and of other power interests, which can pull together all the piecemeal efforts now being made."

Many voices have been raised calling for a world government to be established. Serious-minded scientists and world leaders know that world peace is possible only if all the nations are brought together in a supreme world government! Is World Government Possible?

Yet declares A. F. K. Organski in the book World Politics, "World government is still a long way off.... The creation of a world government through the voluntary agreement of existing nations is so unlikely that we can say flatly that it will never happen"(emphasis ours throughout lesson). And Hans J. Morgenthau in his book Politics Among Nations, asserted: "There is no shirking the conclusion that international peace cannot, be permanent without a world state, and that a world state cannot be established under the present moral, social, and political conditions of the world."

What a paradox! World leaders admit the most urgently needed fact today is WORLD GOVERNMENT. Yet others admit that such a government is still a long way off—that it is a TOTAL IMPOSSIBILITY under present world conditions!

Viewing the history of mankind, anyone can plainly see that men have utterly failed to bring about world peace and prosperity. Fears, diseases, poverty, hate, oppression and injustice have been rampant throughout history.

What about it? Is world government impossible—an idle pipe dream of unrealistic optimists? Is the idea of a soon-coming UTOPIA on earth a hallucinatory fantasy—an absurd myth?

If our only hope lies in the efforts of men, then a utopia is NOT possible and there is no hope for the human race!

God’s World Government

People today fail to recognize there is any power other than their own that can bring about a literal utopia on earth. What great power can, and will, do this?

GOD ALMIGHTY! He has the power and the wisdom to make utopia reality! This is the very message God sent Jesus Christ to proclaim to the world. It is the "Gospel"—the GOOD NEWS—that Christ will return with the power of God to give us universal peace and prosperity at last! Few today understand that God has allotted mankind six thousand years in which to rule himself. During this time, He has kept hands off the affairs of men. He has allowed man to pursue the course that seems right to him (Proverbs 16:25). God has given man the opportunity to prove, by experience, the basic inadequacies of any form of human government—be it communism, fascism, socialism, or even democracy.

God is allowing the human race to prove to itself that NO human form of government can bring us world peace! When Jesus Christ returns, He will establish the government of God on earth. Obedience to the laws of God will be taught throughout the world. And Christ's government will possess the power and the wisdom to enforce His laws. It will prevent the strong from enslaving the weak—true justice will be received by all. Your Bible shows a literal UTOPIA is ahead! It will be a time of spiritual and physical rejuvenation—one thousand years of boundless peace and prosperity! And with the help of this lesson, God has made it possible for you to peer into the future through His prophecies so you can know what that wonderful world tomorrow will be like!

LESSON 4 THE WORLD AHEAD AT LAST The Bible tells us that under the leadership of Jesus Christ, God's government will produce a UTOPIAN PARADISE on earth. Beginning with the descendants of the children of Jacob, and using them as a model and example, God will rebuild and bless ALL nations! Let's study this exciting truth. 1. In the Bible, what does God specifically say regarding the descendants of Jacob? Isaiah 27:6;Ezekiel 36:8-11;Zechariah 8:7-8.Also read Amos 9:7-12.

COMMENT: After His return, Jesus Christ will lead the descendants of ancient Israel out of great tribulation and into the Holy Land where they will be resettled.

2. Will the devastated cities be rebuilt? Amos 9:14-15;Ezekiel 36:33-35.(Be sure to read all of chapter 36. Notice that when this regathering and rebuilding occurs, Israel will never again practice heathen ways, or be removed or be in trouble or captivity again.) Will there be happiness in these cities? Jeremiah 33:10-14;Zechariah 8:4-5.

COMMENT: Today's vast pollution-laden, overpopulated metropolises are rampant, with racial tentions and every kind of evil. These conditions will not exist in tomorrow's cities. Cities in the Millennium will be decentralized. They will be small enough to promote healthy, happy family life, yet large enough for a proper balance between industry and those essentials which promote joyous living.

3. Will Christ make Jerusalem the capital of the earth—the world head-quarters of His government? Zechariah 8:3;Jeremiah 3:17.Will it be an example to the entire world? Isaiah 62:1-2,Isaiah 62:7.

COMMENT: Being near the geographical center of the land surface of the earth, Jerusalem is the ideal focal point for world control. It will be rebuilt to absolute perfection. It will become the future

MODEL CITY—the pattern for cities throughout the world tomorrow.

4. Will the descendants of ancient Israel dwell in safety in their ownland?Ezekiel 28:25-26.Will there be world peace? Isaiah 2:1-4;Micah 4:1-4.

5. Will God cause the laws of nature to function for the benefit of His people? Deuteronomy 28:12;Isaiah 41:18.

COMMENT: God originally promised to bestow great blessings upon ancient Israel if they would only obey Him (Leviticus 26:1-46; Deuteronomy 28:1-68). The Bible shows they disobeyed and were PUNISHED. In the Millennium, the descendants of ancient Israel will obey God and therefore will receive these tremendous blessings!

6. The Middle East is now a relatively barren region. Prophecies show, however, that after Christ returns it will see the most dramatic change of any land. Will the waste places become fertile, and will beautiful forests spread in the Millennium? Isaiah 41:14-20;Isaiah 35:1-2,Isaiah 35:7.

COMMENT; Can you imagine such a fabulous scene? Deserts becoming green, fertile gardens of trees, shrubs, bubbling springs and brooks; mountains brought low and made inhabitable.

Forests interspersed with cultivated fields will also cause the climate to become more healthful and invigorating. Lumber, becoming scarce today due to man’s exploitation, will again increase as the population increases, making it possible for all to have beautiful homes and furniture.

7. Will God transform "Zion" and the surrounding area into a place resembling the Garden of Eden? Isaiah 51:3.

COMMENT: Zion is a hill within the city of Jerusalem. It is the original area of the city—called the "city of David." Since it will be the location of the capital city, "Zion" here represents the entire land of all the tribes of Israel. WILL All Nations to Be Blessed?

Prophecies show that the rest of the earth will share in the great prosperity Christ will bring to Jerusalem and the descendants of Jacob. The whole earth will undergo remarkable changes. 1. Will all nations become submissive—obedient—to Christ? Isaiah 2:1-3.

2. Since the Gentiles will obey Christ in the Millennium, will they belong to Him—be His subjects and servants? Romans 6:16.

3. Will the Gentiles therefore become Abraham’s "children," spiritually speaking? Galatians 3:29.And what was promised to Abraham’s physical descendants? Read both Leviticus 26:1-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14.COMMENT: Ancient Israel was never able to claim all the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-68 and Leviticus 26:1-46 over long periods of time because the people were not faithful in their obedience to God. But with Christ ruling in the Millennium, all nations will be obedient and therefore will also partake of the tremendous blessings originally promised to the tribes of Israel.

Language, Liberty and Superabundance

One of the major barriers to mutual understanding and cooperation between peoples has been the language barrier. When men cannot understand one another, they can’t freely exchange ideas,

philosophies, concepts or opinions. Misunderstandings often lead to conflict. Can you imagine what a world of ONE LANGUAGE would be like? Think what a huge step forward it would be if people everywhere were liberated from the language barrier—spoke and read and wrote the same language—werebound together in common understanding for the first time since the tower of Babel!

1. Will God give all the world ONE pure language so all can serve and worship Him with one accord? Zephaniah 3:9.

COMMENT: Man was once bound together by a common tongue. But he used his knowledge for EVIL—for an attempt to begin the very civilization that would have ended by DESTROYING ITSELF! (See Genesis 11:1-32.) When God divided the languages at the tower of Babel, He was merely forestalling that eventual time of world chaos which even now threatens the annihilation of humanity! In the Millennium, with Christ as the supreme, all-powerful ruler, this danger will be eliminated. And so Jesus Christ will usher in an era of total literacy and total education by giving the world one pure language!

2. There will be a tremendous amount of reconstruction to be done in the Millennium. But how hard will this work seem after people are delivered from the suffering, sorrow and hard bondage of today's evil world? Isaiah 11:10;Isaiah 14:3.Will submission to Christ and His laws bring the blessing of liberty and rest to the minds and bodies of mankind? Matthew 11:28-30.

COMMENT: God will make life enjoyable, comfortable and satisfying for people in the Millennium—as long as they continue to obey His laws. God's way of life truly is the way of LIBERTY—the way of FREEDOM from the drudgery and toil of the ways of this world. But mankind today is not convinced that it is. God is now letting man find out, by experience, how difficult his own ways really are!

3. Much is said today against private ownership of property. Communists and socialists are particularly against it, partly because men have abused it. Does God think private ownership of property is wrong? Micah 4:4;Isaiah 62:8-9.

COMMENT: People will own their property in the Millennium. They will be liberated from governments which deprive them of the righteous rewards of their own toil! And God will not allow private ownership to be abused.

4. What about health in tomorrow's world? Will God also liberate man from sickness and disease? Isaiah 33:21-24;Jeremiah 30:17;Isaiah 35:3-6;Isaiah 58:8.

COMMENT: The combined force of right education about true health and instant HEALING of all sickness will mean PERFECT HEALTH for everyone!

5. The agricultural wealth of a nation is generally the greatest physical asset it can possess. Today, most of the earth is unproductive—only about ten percent of the land surface is actually tillable. There are many deserts, mountainous regions and wildernesses. The exact opposite will be true in the utopia of tomorrow as God begins to bless the entire world! Will He cause the rains to fall at the right time? Ezekiel 34:26;Isaiah 30:23.

COMMENT: Farmers have had to gamble with the weather throughout the centuries. About the most thrilling news they could hear is that their work would always be successful—as long as they obey God:

6. Will there be great rejoicing over the abundance of crops God will bestow in the wonderful world tomorrow? Jeremiah 31:12.Will there actually be a superabundance of food? Amos 9:13. The Great River 1. What will happen when the feet of the returning Christ touch the Mount of Olives? Zechariah 14:4.

2. Will the great valley thus formed become the channel of a mighty riverwhich will arise in Jerusalem? Verse 8. Will one half of this mighty river flow eastward toward the Dead Sea, and the other half flow westward toward the Mediterranean Sea? Same verse.

3. Is the eastern channel of this river—in which "living waters" flow into the Dead Sea—the same as the river described in Ezekiel 47:1-12?Does Ezekiel 47:8 show that when the fresh or "healing" water from this life-giving river begins to flow through the desert into the Dead Sea, the Dead Sea will then be able to support LIFE, thus being "healed"? Will it contain a great multitude of fish? Ezekiel 47:9. Will this river also give life to the barren places through which it flows? Ezekiel 47:12.

COMMENT: The Dead Sea, 1286 feet below sea level, is the lowest spot on earth. Look at any map of the Holy Land and notice that the Jordan River constantly empties into the northern extremity of the Dead Sea. Even though the Dead Sea has no outlet, the water level remains fairly constant. This is because hot weather causes the waters to evaporate at about the same rate water flows into the Dead Sea. The water in this sea is so salty that no plant or marine life can survive in it. But when this new river—the river of "living waters"—begins to empty into the Dead Sea, its waters will rise until they overflow southward through the desert. The overflow will probably carry into the Gulf of Aqaba. Everywhere along the overflow area (except for certain salt swamps and marshes which shall be formed—Ezekiel 47:11) plant and fish life will multiply.

4. Does this river of "living waters" proceed from the spot where God’s Temple will stand—from Christ’s very throne? Ezekiel 47:1,and latter part of Ezekiel 47:12; Joel 3:18,last part. Is the Holy Spirit compared to "living waters"? John 4:10;John 7:37-39.Then isn’t this river clearly a physical counterpart of God’s Holy Spirit?

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit, like the physical river, will go forth from Jerusalem and will "heal" the mental and spiritual problems of mankind!

Clearly, the world tomorrow will be a utopian-paradise of peace, prosperity, and beauty! All nations will share in the great blessings of God. The whole world will be at peace. During that Millennial age, most of the earth’s land surface will be cultivable. Beautiful forests, agricultural areas, fish-filled lakes and streams will be found all over the world—with no more barren tundras, polluted rivers, ravaged landscapes, hostile deserts or waste places. But how will such a world be ushered in? Exactly how will such vast changes come about?

Let’s see what the Bible has to say about the way utopia will come, and who will be involved. Believe it or not, you can have a part in bringing about that wonderful world tomorrow! The Coronation of THE KING IN THE WORLD AHEAD

Consider for a moment what the angelic messenger said to Mary, the mother of Jesus: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great... and the Lord God shall give unto him the THRONE Of his father David: and he shall REIGN over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Notice also the account in John 18:37:"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world...."

Jesus was born to rule and reign as King over all nations of the earth. Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus qualified to become this world's ruler by conquering Satan the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). But He did not remove and replace Satan at that time. He was not crowned King while a human being(John 18:36). He was CRUCIFIED! Jesus was not to assume the responsibilities of His new office as world ruler at that time. When Jesus' disciples assumed the Kingdom of God would be set up in their day, He gave them a parable to explain when He would begin ruling the world.

1. According to this parable in Luke 19:12-17,where did Jesus go after His death to obtain the office of King and to receive the Kingdom? Did He go to Caesar at Rome? Did He go to the people to have them induct Him into office? Luke 19:12. Who only has the authority to make Jesus the "King of kings"? Romans 13:1.

COMMENT: Jesus was showing His disciples He would have to ascend to His Father in heaven (the "far country" in the parable of Luke 19:1-48) to receive authority to rule the nations.

2. After Jesus ascended to heaven and had been there for approximately sixty years, He revealed Himself to the Apostle John. Was there a crown on Jesus' head when John saw Him? Revelation 1:12-18.Doesn't this indicate Jesus may not yet have been crowned after His arrival in heaven? What has Jesus been "crowned" with thus far? Hebrews 2:9

3. But will Jesus have been crowned by the time He returns? Revelation 14:14.What scripture describes Jesus' actual receiving of the Kingdom which He went to heaven to obtain? Daniel 7:13-14.

COMMENT: Here is depicted the actual coronation of Jesus Christ. The "Ancient of Days" is the heavenly Father. The title "Father" was not, used because Jesus had not yet been begotten as a human being when Daniel saw this vision.

Notice also that "one like the Son" appeared before the "Ancient of days" to receive the Kingdom. The Logos or "Word" (John 1:1)was like the Son of man. He was not yet born as a son, but since He would later become a son of man, He was, in Daniel's day, "like the Son of man"—the Jesus who was to be born of a human mother.

Crowned "KING of Kings"

1. How many great crowns will Jesus have? Revelation 14:14.But what about the "many crowns" mentioned in Revelation 19:12?

COMMENT: Jesus will have only one great golden crown. That crown will designate Him as Supreme King over all nations—over all the world. The proper translation of Revelation 19:12 is:

"And on his head are many diadems." A diadem is a small crown or headband signifying royal office. The smaller crowns or diadems symbolize the lesser royal offices Jesus will hold.

2. What will Christ's official title be when He returns? Revelation 19:16.But who are these other "kings"? Let's understand.

3. Are Christians also to receive everlasting crowns—if they overcome? 1 Corinthians 9:25.Will those who qualify in this life rule over the nations as KINGS with Christ? Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 3:21;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:4;Daniel 7:22,Daniel 7:27.

4. When do the "saints"—Christians—receive the reward of crowns and offices of rulership? 2 Timothy 4:8.Compare also Revelation 11:15,Revelation 11:18;Revelation 22:12 with Isaiah 40:10.

COMMENT: Jesus went to heaven to be crowned by the Father. but one of the reasons Jesus will return to earth is to bring rewards of rulership to His resurrected saints!

5. What did Christ say would be the reward of those who manage wisely theabilities God has given them now? Luke 19:16-19.

6. Will the resurrected saints also be priests? Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:6.And judges? Revelation 20:4.

COMMENT: Resurrected Christians will be kings and priests, and will judge among the peoples of the earth during the Millennium.

Perfect, Powerful Government

Christ's government will begin at Jerusalem, where His headquarters will be located (Jeremiah 3:17). As His rule spreads over the whole earth, all rebellious nations will be brought into line.

1. How will Christ deal with those nations which refuse to come to Jerusalem to worship God the way he commands? Zechariah 14:16-19.

2. What will be Christ's general policy for governing the nations? Revelation 12:5;Revelation 19:15.Note the words "rod of iron." COMMENT: When God set His hand to save mankind, He will use a "rod of iron," symbolizing absolute authority. He will rule with power, and He will not hesitate to use it when necessary! Man, influenced by his old habits and attitudes formed in this present evil world, must be held under control until he learns his lesson and comes to see that God's way of living is best for all.

Jesus Christ will be in absolute control of the earth, but He will rule with perfect justice and mercy, having once been human Himself (Hebrews 2:9-10;Hebrews 4:15). He will at first literally have to FORCE men to be happy! He will impose His merciful rule on rebellious stiff-necked mankind, and bring the world COMPULSORY JOY!

Although God will rule with power and authority, He does not intend to "cram His religion" down the throats of people. He will not force anyone to accept His truth in the sense of spiritual conversion—repentance, baptism, etc.

God is not a stern, cruel monster as some agnostics have falsely implied. God wants man at all times to be really happy! But God knows the only way to lasting happiness is obedience to His

laws!

Gradually, as men obey God’s laws they will wake up to the wisdom and justice of God’s rule and will submit gladly to His authority, and a "rod of iron" will no longer be necessary.

Re-education in the Millennium

Speaking of the Millennial rule of Christ, the Bible declares: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

During the Millennium God will TEACH mankind the laws that produce happiness. He will give each individual the CHOICE, after learning His laws and seeing the happiness they produce, of whether to obey God’s laws or not. The vast majority of mankind will see God’s way is truly best and will voluntarily choose to OBEY Him. But before men can really choose they must clearly see the alternatives. They must be RE-EDUCATED so they can see through old prejudices and discern true values.

Education will play a vitally important role in the Millennium. A Gallup Poll once revealed that only two percent of Americans thought education is their most vital concern. But in the world tomorrow it will receive TOP PRIORITY! Exactly why is education so important? Let’s understand.

1. Is faulty education, which has befogged the world’s understanding, likea veil that hides the mind from truth? Isaiah 25:7.

2. Who is fundamentally responsible for deceiving the whole world? Revelation 12:9.Doesn’t that make him the real author of wrong education? John 8:44.Will the devil be allowed to deceive the nations when Christ commences to re-educate the world? Revelation 20:1-3.

3. Has the devil deceived the nations largely by means of false religion—including false religions that PROFESS Christ, but DENY Him by their works? 2 Corinthians 11:13-15;Titus 1:16.

4. What kind of knowledge is most lacking in the world today? Is it spiritual knowledge? Hosea 4:6.What is the tragic result of this dearth of spiritual knowledge? Same verse.

What Is True Education?

1. What does God think of the wisdom of the world? 1 Corinthians 3:19.Where does this world’s wisdom lead? Proverbs 14:12.

2. But what is truth? John 17:17.What will truth do for people in the world tomorrow? John 8:31-32.

COMMENT: A common, but false, concept in the world today is that education should have nothing to do with a "way of life." Many believe education should teach you only how to earn a living, but NOT how to live! Not so at Ambassador College. Here students are also taught to "recapture true values" from the FOUNDATION of knowledge—the Bible!

3. Do we have a written record that the true apostolic church preached God’s "way" of life? Acts 19:9,Acts 19:23. Does the world approve of God’s "way"? Acts 24:14.

COMMENT: God’s way of life is the result of right education. It is based upon the bedrock of TRUTH. But God’s truth has been totally rejected by this world. The Bible has been completely

disregarded by modern education!

4. The world is fast approaching a smashing climax which will shock people into a realization that something is radically wrong with our modern way of life. What will people then acknowledge? Jeremiah 16:19.Would they desire to learn another way if their present way were better?

COMMENT: The people of this world have inherited lies from birth—profitless ideas that have been funneled into their unquestioning minds. As adults they continue accepting fallacies learned in childhood, and build their lives around biases and prejudices. When Christ rescues the world from annihilation, people will acknowledge their ignorance—their lack of sound education. This confession of error is actually the first step toward "repentance"!

5. What does repentance really involve? Isaiah 55:6-9.Isn't it clearly turning from the wrong way one has been living? Isaiah 55:7.

COMMENT: Repentance clearly involves the forsaking of all wrong concepts about life we have always taken for granted without proof, and turning to God's truth!

6. Will re-education in the Millennium necessarily remold man's methods of doing business? 2 Corinthians 8:21.Will it remold the social order? 1 Peter 4:3-4.And all other phases of life in general? 1 Corinthians 10:31.

God's System for Re-education The evils in the world today can be laid at the doorstep of false education. Many educators are finaly waking up to the fact that our great universities have FAILED! They have been hotbeds of discontent, strife, revolt and sedition. This system of education obviously needs to be changed! What kind of system will replace it?

1. In addition to ruling as supreme King over all the nations, will Christ also be the supreme teacher? Isaiah 2:3;Psalms 25:8-10.

COMMENT: Christ will unite these two functions in Himself. How plain that in God's pattern for world rule, religion and government are not separate!

2. Under Christ, who will rule over the modern descendants of Jacob? Jeremiah 30:7-9.What did Jeremiah mean by "raise up"? 1 Corinthians 6:14.Will David be a prince over Israel? Ezekiel 34:23-24.

COMMENT: David will be resurrected to rule over the physical descendants of ancient Israel. His office will include the responsibility of TEACHING the people the laws of God.

3. Will the twelve apostles be placed over each of the twelve tribes of Israel? Matthew 19:28.Will each apostle have a throne? Luke 22:29-30.Will they then TEACH the individual tribes of Israel God's TRUTH? Matthew 28:19-20.

COMMENT: The apostles preached the gospel to the nations 1900 years ago, and God's Church is preaching it to the nations today. But think how much more all the nations and the whole earth will hear God's truth proclaimed during the Millennium!

4. Who else will rule and teach in the world tomorrow? Revelation 2:26;Revelation 5:10.

COMMENT: The resurrected Christians mentioned in Revelation 5:10 are to be "priests" as well as kings. And the true function of a priest is to teach. (Revelation 2:7). When God intervenes in human affairs, it will not be left up to the people to vote in their own rulers or choose their own teachers. In the world tomorrow GOD will appoint His resurrected saints as the rulers and educators, and not lobbyists or other pressure groups will be able to corrupt them. They will teach the people all His laws and His statutes which are the way to peace, prosperity and happiness!

5. Will the resurrected saints be able to appear in a material body at will? Isaiah 30:20-21.What will they do? Isaiah 30:21.

COMMENT: In the world tomorrow. those now qualifying to rule under Christ will be ever-present and ever-ready to speak or act, both to teach and to nip in the bud any attempted act of disobedience.

Because they will be composed of spirit, they will be able to come and go as necessary, to pass through walls, or simply disappear, just as Christ was able to after His resurrection (John 20:17,John 20:19, John 20:25-27; Luke 24:31).

Results of sweeping Education

1. Will people come to see eye to eye as they learn of God and His way?Isaiah 52:7-8.Will the whole world come to know His truth? Habakkuk 2:14;Isaiah 11:9;Jeremiah 31:34.Will even those who grumbled against God learn His truth? Isaiah 29:24.

2. Will the Egyptians "know the Lord" in that day? Isaiah 19:21.How will the Egyptians, as well as all other people, really come to know God? Isaiah 55:6-7;1 John 2:3-4.Will Ethiopia also seek to gain the benefits of an obedient relationship with Christ? Psalms 68:31.

COMMENT: The nations near Israel spoken of in the Bible are types of all nations in the world tomorrow. All the nations of the world will learn that true Christianity really pays!

3. Will Gentile rulers bring presents to Christ in acknowledgment of His educational and material benefits? Psalms 68:29.Upon what conditions has God always promised to shower great material prosperity? Psalms 3:10-12.

COMMENT: Obedience to God’s laws is what will produce universal prosperity, peace and happiness in the world tomorrow! Isn’t it plain that the basis of right education is the knowledge of God and His laws? Will there be New Natures?

1. Will God change the natures of animals in the Millennium? Isaiah 11:6-8;Hosea 2:18.Will all creatures be peaceful? Ezekiel 34:25.

2. In the Bible God speaks of the heart of man as being symbolic of his mind. What is man’s heart—his mind—really like today? Jeremiah 17:9.Is man’s mind naturally submissive to God and His law? Romans 8:7.

3. What does God say He will add to the minds of people in the Millennium to CHANGE the basic attitude of man? Ezekiel 36:26-27;Jeremiah 31:33.

COMMENT: As God is going to change the lion's inborn desire for flesh food to an appetite for vegetation and is going to give peaceful natures to all other creatures, so He will make a truly marvelous and miraculous CHANGE in man's hostile mind. This change in the mind will be brought about by repentance and the receiving of God's HOLY Spirit! This is what will actually make the wonderful world tomorrow a literal UTOPIA! By a miracle, God will place His very own nature of outgoing love within mankind (Romans 5:5). True love will thus be manifested in human beings through the Holy Spirit of God. People will then love their fellowmen and strive to make them happy!

It would require a thick book to begin to describe the wonderful conditions which could prevail on this earth—and which will finally prevail when the human heart is HUMBLED, CONVERTED by the Holy Spirit—given the very nature of God! (2 Peter 1:4.) God's Way BEST After All! Do you grasp the significance of what you have studied in your Bible with this lesson? God prophesied long ago of a time when He would cause this earth's inhabitants to possess magnificent abundance. It is then that the world will wake up to a great truth—that GOD'S WAY IS BEST AFTER ALL! The time is almost here when "The LORD of hosts [shall] make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations"—their spiritual blindness (Isaiah 25:6-7).

God will soon halt this world's mad plunge toward nuclear cosmocide. He will send Jesus Christ to intervene in world affairs and put down all rebellion. Then He and His saints will begin teaching the nations God's truth and His laws, His ways that bring blessings, prosperity, peace and happiness. The utopian paradise which mankind has always longed for will finally be ushered in. Men will at long last WAKE UP! He will finally see through the veil of prejudices which have prevented he him from following the WAY which would bring them all of their true desires. No one in that wonderful world tomorrow will be deceived as the vast majority of mankind today! There will be no devil around to lead people astray. ALL will know the TRUTH! There will be no more religious confusion.Eyes will be Opened to God's revealed truth. Humans will become TEACHABLE. People will start living God's WAY—the way of outgoing concern for others—the way of TRUE VALUES—the way of PEACE, of HAPPINESS Of WELL-BEING, of JOY!

Crime, sickness, disease, and suffering will be GONE! Poverty and ignorance will be banished. SMILES will enlighten human faces—countenances will radiate with sparkling JOY! Wild animals will be tame. Air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution will be no more! There will be crystal-pure water to drink; clean, crisp, pure air to breathe; rich fertile soil producing full-flavored foods where deserts once existed, producing full-flavored foods; and fantastic BEAUTY in flowers, shrubs, trees. The millennial world will be filled with HAPPY people guided, helped, protected and ruled by Christ and the saints—and all human beings will learn that they, too, are called by God to inherit EVERLASTING LIFE in supreme happiness and thrilling Joy!

WHAT A FABULOUS WORLD THAT WILL BE!

Although a utopian paradise is indeed impossible by the hands of men—although none of this world's governments can bring us true peace, prosperity and abundance—your Bible shows THE GREAT GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH CAN AND WILL PRODUCE UTOPIA ON EARTH... SOON! May God speed that glorious day!

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle, or underline each correct answer. After you've finished, check your choices with the correct answers listed at the end of the test, and then rate yourself.

1. How will a "utopia" of world peace and prosperity finally become reality? A. By a worldwide revival in all churches. B. Through a strengthened NATO and UN. C. Only by the rule of a divine world government. D. By men learning to control the weather and the population explosion.

2. The wonderful world tomorrow will A. have no cities. B. become reforested on a grand scale. C. not be very prosperous, except in God's model nation. D. lack rainfall in desert areas.

3. The life-giving stream which will flow east and west from Jerusalem A. symbolizes the tears Jesus shed over Jerusalem. B. will not literally exist. C. will quickly be swallowed up and lost in the southern desert. D. symbolizes the "healing" of the nations by God's Holy Spirit.

4. Jesus' actual coronation A. took place when He ascended to heaven. B. will take place before His second coming. C. takes place after He conquers all nations. D. took place when He conquered the devil.

5. As "King of kings," how many great crowns will Jesus have? A. Three: for heaven, hell and earth. B. Seven. C. One. D. Many.

6. When will the "saints" receive their crowns? A. After they prove their ability to rule the nations. B. At the "rapture." C. After Jesus has conquered, completely reorganized and rebuilt this world, and solved its problems. D. At Christ's return.

7. David will A. remain dead in his grave during the Millennium B. rule as king over the descendants of Jacob in the Millennium. C. rule over theGentiles. D. have less authority over Israel than the twelve apostles.

8. In the Millennium, Christ will A. govern gently at all times. B. never deal severely with the rebellious C. not be concerned about education. D. teach mankind God's way of life.

9. The goal of Christ's re-education program will primarily be to A. reform the economic system. B. teach man how to fulfill his democratic responsibility. C. remold the social life of the community. D. develop the whole character of man—perfect his physical, mental, emotional and spiritual life.

10. The most important change destined to occur in tomorrow's world will be in A. man's hostile attitude. B. the nature of animals. C. the weather. D. the languages.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. The one problem today that will continue on over into the world tomorrow will be the multiplicity and corruption of languages and dialects.T F

12. In the Millennium, work will seem like rest compared to the suffering, sorrow and hard bondage of this world's ways. T F

13. Resurrected "saints"—Christians—will be "priests," as well as "kings" under Christ. T F 14. False education is an unfortunate curse, but thankfully it does not enslave mankind. T F 15. The Millennium will become a literal utopia because man's efforts will finally make it so. T F Draw a line

from each numbered phrase to the correctly related lettered phrase.

16. Utopia

A. Myth

B. An impossibility

17. God’s law

C. Changes man’s attitude

D. Never rebuilt

18. Great river

E. Future world capital

F. Way to blessings

19. Jerusalem

G.The Nile

H. "Heals" the Dead Sea

20. The Holy Spirit

I. Comng soon on earth

J. Produced by science

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-C 5-C 9-D 13-T 17-F 19-20 correct - - - excellent 2-B 6-D 10-A 14-F 18-H 16-18 correct - - - good 3-D 7-B 11-F 15-F 19-E 13-15 correct - - - fair 4-B 8-D 12-T 16-I 20-C

Lesson 05

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 5 Just What is Man? Is man an immortal soul in a material body? Is death the separation of body and soul? What REALLY happens to a person at death? These questions have puzzled mankind for thousands of years. Study the surprising ANSWERS in this revealing lesson!

DEATH is a reality!

Though many like to shove it from their minds to escape having to think about it, death is real. It is the inevitable consequence of being alive!

Religious people often picture death as the inescapable final plunge into the unknown—into the "next world" with its heaven, hell or purgatory.

What is this thing called life, and DEATH? Isn’t it about time we finally learned what man really IS, and what hope there is—if any—of life after death? Do You know if you Have an Immortal Soul? The ancient philosophers taught that man is essentially an immortal spiritual "soul" housed in a temporary body of flesh—that the real man is not the body, but an invisible, immaterial "immortal soul" that thinks, hears, sees and will consciously live on forever. At death, according to the speculation of the ancients, the soul leaves the body and journeys to a nebulous realm, possibly paradise or a place of punishment. The body, they correctly observed, goes to the grave.

Some Oriental philosophers speculated that the souls of the departed go into other bodies after death and live as animals, birds, snakes, even trees or gnats—or perhaps as human beings. This doctrine, called "transmigration of souls" or "reincarnation," is currently gaining a renewed popularity. But what is the authority for these beliefs? Do they come from Biblical revelation? Where did they come from? Where did the Christian-professing churches acquire their present teachings about the immortality of the soul?

Consider this candid statement from the Jewish Encyclopedia: "The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body"—after death—"is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere taught in the Holy Scripture" (from article, "Immortality of the Soul," emphasis ours throughout lesson).

Inherited from Pre-Christian World This same article continues: "The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended." The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, according to this respected encyclopedia, came from pre-Christian Greek philosophers who acquired it from pagan Egypt and Babylon!

Notice what Herodotus, the famous Greek historian who lived in the fifth century before Jesus, admitted: "The Egyptians also were the first who asserted the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal...This opinion, some among the Greeks have at different periods of time adopted as their

own" (Euterpe, chapter 123).

It was the Greek Socrates who traveled to Egypt and consulted the Egyptians on this very teaching. After his return to Greece, he imparted the concept to Plato, his most famous pupil. Compare the present-day doctrine of the churches with what Plato wrote in his book, The Phaedo:

"The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit of life's opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, and since immortal, indestructible...Do we believe there is such a thing as death? To be sure. And is this anything but the separation of the soul and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation, when the soul exists in herself and separate from the body, and the body is parted from the soul. That is death....Death is merely the separation of soul and body." Sounds a lot like ordinary church teaching, doesn't it?You were probably taught that this same doctrine was totally Christian.You undoubtedly assumed it came straight from the Bible—but it did not, as you will see for yourself. After Plato came Aristotle who perpetuated the theory. Then the poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.) popularized it throughout the Roman World. But how did this concept become a fundamental doctrine of the vast majority of professing Christians?

Later it was Labeled "Christian" The introduction of this popular superstition into the churches was a gradual process which took centuries. The early "church fathers" were divided on this subject. As late as 160 A.D. Justin, the philosopher-turned-professing-Christian, wrote:

"But our Jesus Christ, being crucified and dead, and having ascended to heaven, reigned, and by those things which were published in His name among all nations by the apostles, there is joy offered to those who expect the immortality promised by Him" (Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 176). Many of the early Catholics indeed knew they did not have immortality within themselves. It was something they yet expected to receive.

Origen, an early Catholic teacher in Alexandria, Egypt, joined the speculations of Plato with certain parts of the Bible and called his philosophy neo-Platonism. Here is what Origen wrote around 200 A.D.: "Souls are immortal, as God Himself is eternal and immortal"! He openly professed to be a true "Platonist, who believed in the immortality of the soul" (Ante- Nicene Fathers, vol. IV, pp. 314, 402).

Another influential teacher at the close of the second century was Tertullian of Phoenician North Africa. He wrote: "For some things are known, even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many....I may use, therefore, the opinion of Plato, when he declares:

'EVERY SOUL IS IMMORTAL'" (ibid., vol. III, p. 547). And so the personal ideas of these influential men helped mold the thinking of the entire Christian-professing world. But a few Catholic writers and teachers as late as the time of Constantine condemned the change in doctrine from Christ's teachings to those of Plato. Here is the remonstration of Arnobius against those who were being "carried away by an extravagant opinion of themselves, that souls are immortal....Will you lay aside your habitual arrogance, O men, who claim God as your Father, and maintain that you are immortal just as He is?" (ibid., vol. VI, p. 440.)

After the time of Emperor Constantine—who forced the Roman Empire to accept one universal faith—Augustine, another writer of North African extraction, "sanctified" the doctrine of the immortality of the soul in his book, The City of God. Along came other writers—all under the

influence of Plato, Aristotle and Virgil—who dominated the philosophy of Western "Christian" theology during the early Middle Ages.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.), Italian scholastic teacher and theologian, stamped the doctrine of the immortality of the soul permanently on the Christian-professing world.

Fifty years later, Dante Alighieri wrote the immensely famous poem, The Divine Comedy, in which he pictured for thecommon people his imaginary concepts of hell, purgatory and paradise—which have been widely believed since that time. But not only did this doctrine become religious dogma in the medieval world, those who rejected this idea became branded as heretics!

Finally it was Imposed by Force Just before the Protestant Reformation, the Lateran Council of 1513 issued this decree:

"Whereas some have dared to assert concerning the nature of the reasonable soul that it is mortal, we, with the approbation of the sacred council, do condemn and reprobate all those who assert that the intellectual soul is mortal, seeing, according to the canon of Pope Clement V, that the soul is...immortal...and we decree that all who adhere to like erroneous assertions shall be shunned and punished as heretics." That meant that any who taught the truth were to be turned over to the civil authorities for punishment. And the punishment was usually severe! The Original Protestant View

During the Reformation, some early Protestants tried to cast off the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Martin Luther declared that the Bible did not teach the immortality of the soul (Defense, Proposition No. 27). "Luther held that the soul died with the body, and that God would hereafter raise both the one and the other" (Historical View, p. 344).

How different were Luther’s first teachings from Protestant doctrine today! Here are Luther’s own words, expressed about the year 1522:

"It is probable, in my opinion, that, with very few exceptions, indeed, the dead sleep in utter insensibility till the day of judgment...On what authority can it be said that the souls of the dead may not sleep...in the same way that the living pass in profound slumber the interval between their downlying at night and their uprising in the morning?" (From Michelet’s Life of Luther, Bohn’s edition, p. 133.)

Luther’s original teachings have never ceased to embarrass Protestant theologians who have since readopted the teachings of ancient Egypt and Greece.

William Tyndale, the printer of the first New Testament in English and another of the Reformers, wrote: "In putting departed souls in heaven, hell, or purgatory you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection....The true faith putteth the resurrection; the heathen philosophers, denying that, did put that souls did ever live....If the soul be in heaven, tell me what cause is there for the resurrection?" That’s a very good question! The Protestant Reformers found the people unwilling to change their doctrines. Gradually, the Reformers themselves gave in to popular tradition --tradition which has its roots in pagan philosophy and speculation! And so many churchgoers today believe the doctrine of the immortality of the soul simply because they have unquestioningly embraced the speculations that have been passed down from ancient pagan philosophers! The Apostle Paul wrote about this very kind of

speculation: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments"—fundamental concepts—"of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The Bible, as we shall soon see, is NOT the source of the common belief in the immortality of the soul. Surprising as it may seem to some, the Bible plainly teaches that man is mortal—physical—fleshly—of the dust. And when he dies, he turns to dust. Let’s look into the Bible and PROVE what it really says!

Lesson 5 Does Science Have the Answer? Is man an immortal soul in a material body? What does science have to say about it? Absolutely nothing to support the concept! Science simply has no evidence for the existence of an immortal soul. Science deals only with physical, material substances and behavior— physical matter and energy. Modern science is limited entirely to the Material world that can be weighed and measured—to that which can be perceived by the five senses. The spiritual is completely outside the realm of physical science and is therefore not subject to the "scientific method." Science cannot measure—hence cannot reveal—any life apart from matter. And so all that man can know (apart from divine revelation) is material. But what science has learned can nevertheless help immensely in understanding the composition of man.

Science has discovered that all living matter, in its simplest form, is protoplasm—a substance that composes the "living stuff"’ of the cells of both plants and animals, as well as man. This much also is definitely known: Individuals who "died" on the operating table and then were revived through heart massage or other means, usually remember absolutely nothing about the intervening time! They "went" nowhere! They were simply unconscious. However, some who were declared "clinically dead" have described sights and/or sounds that caused them to jump to the erroneous conclusion that they had glimpsed something of the "after-life." Just as some dreaming is compressed into a very brief time-span, so also these people were merely dreaming or "hallucinating."

These facts would surely indicate that an "immortal soul," if there is one, is completely unable to think, remember or reason apart from the body!

Science, therefore, has no evidence of an "immortal soul" in man. Even the experiences of people on the operating table who "died" temporarily provide no evidence of an immortal soul. Where, then, can we find reliable evidence one way or the other?

What IS Man? The Bible is the FOUNDATION of knowledge. In it the Creator God has revealed much knowledge that is totally beyond man’s capability to discover for himself—including the knowledge and understanding of what man is, as well as what he is to be. Let’s not assume. Let’s look into the Bible to see what man really is.

1. What did Jesus Christ say man is composed of? John 3:6,first part. And is that which is "born of spirit" of a totally different composition? Same verse.

COMMENT: Man is composed of flesh—of protoplasm. Jesus plainly says that if one is born of (and therefore composed of) flesh, he cannot also at the same time be born of (composed of) spirit. He must be one or the other! So this verse alone is strong evidence that man is not an immortal spiritual "soul" in a body of mortal flesh. But let’s continue.

2. Was the Apostle Paul an immortal soul clothed with a body of flesh—or did he speak of himself and his flesh as being synonymous? Romans 7:18.

COMMENT: Paul did not distinguish between himself and his flesh in this verse. He indicated they were one and the same. (We will deal with some of Paul's other statements later.) Although these verses do not conclusively prove man has no immortal soul, they certainly should open one's mind to the possiblity that such does not exist! In order to understand whether man has an immortal soul, let's go back to Creation—the time when the first man was formed—to see exactly what happened. The Creation of Man

God created the first man. And He tells us what He made him from so there would be no doubt as to what we really are. Here is that account as revealed in the Bible:

1. Out of what did God form man? Genesis 2:7.Notice that it was the man—not only the body—that was formed.

2. Was it the whole man—"thou"—that was composed of dust? Genesis 3:19.

COMMENT: Adam was made from and therefore composed of earth!

3. What would eventually happen to the conscious man? Genesis 3:19,last part.

4. After God had formed the man and made every cell in his body, what did He do to give him life? Genesis 2:7.

COMMENT: God blew air—"the breath of life" containing oxygen—into the man's lungs through his nostrils, and the man began to live! The verse does not say that God breathed an immortal soul into the man.

5. Is the "breath of life" the same thing which passes through the nostrils of animals? Genesis 7:21-22.Is it the breath of life that is cut off when a human being or an animal drowns? Genesis 7:23. Then the source of life in man and animals is the same, isn't it? COMMENT: If the "breath of life" even remotely meant that man has an immortal soul, then so do animals, birds and even insects—gnats, fleas, mosquitoes, etc.!

What Kind of "Soul"?

1. When God had breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, what did he become? Genesis 2:7,last part.

COMMENT: Man does not have a soul—man IS a "soul"! The original Hebrew word for "soul" is nephesh. Bagster's Analytical Hebrew, and Chaldee Lexicon defines it as "breath" and "anything that breathes, an animal." It can also refer to a "person," or even "one dead, a dead body." In Genesis 1:21,Genesis 1:24;Genesis 2:19;Genesis 9:10,Genesis 9:12, Genesis 9:15-16 and Leviticus 11:46,the same word nephesh is translated "creature" when referring to animals. And so man is a SOUL. Notice that the word nephesh is translated as "dead body" or "the dead" in Leviticus 19:28;Leviticus 21:1;Leviticus 22:4;Numbers 5:2;Numbers 6:11Numbers 9:6-7, Numbers 9:10. The "soul," then, is merely an air-breathing entity that is subject to death and decay. It is not immortal! The soul is composed of the "dust of the ground"—it is material, not spiritual. It is matter. When man breathes, he is a living soul. When man ceases to breathe, he becomes a nonliving or

dead soul. That’s what your Bible reveals. Are you willing to believe what the Bible plainly says?

2. Can the "soul" die? Ezekiel 18:4,Ezekiel 18:20. If the soul were immortal—eternal— could it die? Is man plainly said to be "mortal"? Job 4:17.

COMMENT: Since man is a soul, and the soul is mortal—then man is mortal, subject to death. That is why the Scriptures call human beings "mortal man."

3. Was Adam subject to death? Genesis 2:17,last part. Was it the body only that would die, or was it the whole conscious man—Adam—"thou"—that would die?

4. What one thing befalls both man and beast? Ecclesiastes 3:19.Is this because they all have the same temporary source of life—the breath of air? Same verse.

5. Do all men and animals alike go to the same place at death? Ecclesiastes 3:20.

COMMENT: When an animal dies, it is dead. When man dies, he is completely dead, too. Like "Rover," when a man dies he dies "all over." And all men and animals return to the dust from which they came.

6. Now what does Ecclesiastes 3:21 ask?

COMMENT: Far from proving an immortal soul, Solomon’s question actually ridicules the "immortal soul" doctrine which was extant and believed by the pagans even in his day. Therefore he asks a question which no pagan can answer. The Hebrew word ruach, translated "spirit" in this verse, also means air, wind, breath. It is translated 28 times as "breath" in the King James Version. Three examples are Genesis 6:17;Genesis 7:15 and Lamentations 4:20.It is also translated 90 times as "wind." Thus we can see that ruach has a very broad meaning, and may be applied to a wide variety of things whose common denominator is invisibility. It may mean "attitude" as well as "spirit," and with the word "holy" preceding, it means the Holy Spirit of God.

Solomon asks, therefore, since the same event—death—occurs to both man and beast, "Who knows whether a man’s spirit goes up while a beast’s goes downward?"

There is, however, a vast difference between man and beast, as we will shortly see—and that difference does involve the Hebrew word ruach.

What Is the Life of Man?

Man IS a living, breathing MORTAL creature—a nephesh, or living soul in whose nostrils is air. What happens to the breath of air that goes into our lungs? When you take a breath of air, it passes through your trachea, into the lungs and into little pockets or sacs called alveoli. There oxygen is absorbed from the air and goes into the bloodstream. As the blood flows through the blood vessels from the lungs on the way back to the heart, and then is pumped again throughout the body, the oxygen is carried by the red blood cells throughout the body to the individual cells. Each of your 60 trillion cells uses oxygen to "burn" your food to create the energy needed to power your organs and muscles and to maintain body heat. The life of man clearly depends on the blood, and the blood needs the breath of life to keep the body active and alive.

1. According to the Bible, is the life of man and animals found in the bloodstream—or in an immortal soul? Leviticus 17:11,Leviticus 17:14. Does Deuteronomy 12:23 corroborate this?

COMMENT: In these verses, the Hebrew word nephesh is translated "life." Thus nephesh (or soul) can refer either to the fleshly man or the life of man which depends on his blood.

2. Did Christ make His "soul" an offering for sin? Isaiah 53:10.How did He accomplish this? Isaiah 53:12.

COMMENT: Christ voluntarily offered up His body to be crucified and allowed His life's blood ("soul") to be poured out!

How clear that when a man ceases to breathe the breath of life, his heart stops beating and circulating his life's blood, and he dies. But then what happens? Is There Life After Death?

1. When a person dies—becomes lifeless—does he still have a conscious existence because of an immortal soul within him? Ecclesiastes 9:5;Psalms 146:4.

COMMENT: Since the Bible states plainly that the dead are not conscious of anything, we can logically conclude that man is not born with an immortal soul which is conscious and aware of things happening around it after death!

2. Are the dead able to praise God? Psalms 115:17.But if Christians have immortal souls, wouldn't they be praising God after they died, thankful to be with Him in paradise? Here, then, is more concrete evidence that human beings do not have immortal souls.

3. Is there any remembrance of God in death? Psalms 6:5.

COMMENT: Death is the opposite of life. Death is the CESSATION of life! That is the reason dead people can remember nothing. How clear!

4. According to Matthew 10:28,is the "soul" something which can be destroyed? Then didn't Jesus plainly show that the soul is not immortal? Let's understand exactly what Jesus was talking about. COMMENT: Although wome people use this text to support their belief of the immortality of the soul, it plainly says the soul is something that can be destroyed in hell! Thus, whatever this "soul" is, it could NOT be immortal! The Greek word here translated "soul" is psuche. It refers to the same thing as the Hebrew word nephesh. It simply means life, existence. In Matthew 10:28,Christ obviously used this word to refer to "life" that man cannot destroy—but which God can. What kind of life could this be? Obviously life which God RESTORES by a resurrection!

Man cannot "destroy" a life that God turns right around and renews. But GOD can destroy it—permanently—by casting the resurrected physical person into the "lake of fire," never to be resurrected again!

Luke makes this scripture plainer: "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which AFTER he hath killed hath power to cast into hell..." (Luke 12:5). God not only has the power to take our present physical life, but also has the power to resurrect us and—if we have proved disobedient and incorrigible—to cast us into the lake of fire from which there will be NO future resurrection! (Revelation 20:14-15;Revelation 21:8).

Although men may kill their physical bodies, true Christians know that men cannot take from them eternal life which God has promised at the resurrection. Is Man Merely an Animal?

Since man does not have an immortal soul, does this mean he is just an animal—here today and gone tomorrow? Not at all!

What is it that makes man different from the animals? Let’s understand the amazing truth!

1. Were animals created in God’s image—or were they created each after its own kind? Genesis 1:21,Genesis 1:24-25. But was man created in the "image" and "likeness" of GOD? Genesis 1:26-27.Was man to rule over all other creatures? Genesis 1:26.

COMMENT: The Hebrew words of Genesis 1:26-27 reveal God’s great plan and ultimate purpose for mankind! When God molded Adam of the dust, he was shaped in the "likeness"—the outward form and shape—of God Himself. God didn’t form any of the other creatures to be an exact clay replica of Himself. This unique form and shape was given to man alone!

Notice again that God said "Let us make man in our image...." The Hebrew here indicates far more than merely the outward form and shape of God—His likeness. "Image" refers to mind and character! God intended for man—to whom He gave the gift of a thinking, reasoning mind—to develop the very mind and character of GOD!

Each animal was created with a brain suited for each animal kind. Butanimals do not have the potential of MIND and CHARACTER which God gave only to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power!

It is this very SPECIAL ATTRIBUTE OF MIND AND CHARACTER that separates men from animals!

Animals do not have reasoning, self-conscious minds. Animals follow instinctive habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration, and reproduction. God has "programmed" their brains, so to speak, with particular instinctive aptitudes. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests, etc. These aptitudes are inherited—they are not the result of logical cognitive processes. For example, thousands of birds flock south each year as winter approaches in the Northern Hemisphere. They don’t stop to "reason" why, they don’t ask themselves whether they should, they don’t "plan ahead" an itinerary for the trip. At a given signal—like the pre-set alarm of a clock—they leave their summer feeding grounds in the north and travel thousands of miles south. Scientists don’t fully understand why—they merely observe the operation of this animal instinct.

Each species or kind of bird builds different nests, feeds on different foods, and migrates in different ways at different times to different places. But none of these actions is planned by the birds. They are merely the capability and proclivity which Almighty God built into the instinct of each kind at creation. But man is vastly different. Man is able to perceive and understand various ways to do any one thing. Man can reason from memorized facts and knowledge, draw conclusions, make decisions, will to act according to a thought-out plan.

Each man may build a different house, eat different foods—live an entirely different way of life—from every other man. If a man wants to change his way of life—he can! Man is not subject to instinct. He is not governed by a set of pre-determined habit patterns as animals are.

Man can choose—he has free moral agency. He can devise codes of conduct and exercise self-discipline. Man can originate ideas and evaluate scientific knowledge because he has a MIND which is patterned after God's own mind! Man can devise, plan, and bring his plans to fruition because he has been given some of the very creative powers of God!

Man alone can wonder, "Why was I born? What is life? What is death? Is there a purpose in human existence?" Man, unlike the animals, not only "knows" how to do certain things, but he also KNOWS he knows—that is, he is aware that he has "knowledge." He is conscious of the fact. He is self-conscious, aware of his own existence as a unique being. The attributes of mind and character make man God's UNIQUE physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with man and expects him to develop the "image" of GOD'S perfect mind and holy character!

What Makes Man's Mind Unique?

Many animals have physical brains as large, or even larger than man's brain, and with similar cerebral cortex complexity— but none has the powers of intellect, logic, self-consciousness and creativity. What gives man's brain these unique abilities? And what will God use, after the death and complete dissolution of the physical body and brain, to reproduce each individual at the resurrection?

1. Since man has no immortal soul within him which enables him to live on apart from his body after death (remember man is a MORTAL soul), does the Bible speak elsewhere of a "spirit IN man"? Job 32:8;Zechariah 12:1;1 Corinthians 2:9-14.Notice especially 1 Corinthians 2:11 of 1 Corinthians 2:1-16. Is this spirit "in" man clearly distinguished from the Holy Spirit of God? Same verses in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

COMMENT: This spirit is not the man—it is something that is IN the man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms human MIND. It imparts to man's brain his unique powers of intellect and personality—the ability to think rationally and make free will decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or any type of philosophical knowledge. But that's all! The spirit that is IN man has no consciousness of itself. It is not an "immortal soul." This spirit is not the "man."

Because of this spiritual element, the Bible often uses the word "spirit" simply to mean man's mind, intelligence, attitude. To distinguish this kind of spirit in man and the kind of spirit that is God's Holy Spirit from mere physical breath, the book of Job continues in context to use two separate Hebrew words—ruach for spirit, neshamah for breath (Job 33:4;Job 34:14).

2. When a person dies, does this totally nonconscious "spirit in man" return to God who gave it? Ecclesiastes 12:7.

COMMENT: This spirit in each individual, of necessity, does more than merely impart the power of intellect to the physical brain. It becomes a spiritual "mold" of the entire person—even to preserving memory, knowledge and character. And so when a person dies, that spirit "recording" returns to God and is "filed" away until the time God will "replay" it to bring about the resurrection of the identical personality to life and consciousness.

Why haven't you heard this truth before? Simply because the whole world has been DECEIVED!

3. Can the human mind—having only this human spirit of man—understand the spiritual things of God? 1 Corinthians 2:11.What must be added before a man can comprehend spiritually revealed knowledge? Same verse.

COMMENT: Spiritual things cannot be seen with the eye, heard with the ear, felt with the hands. The human mind, which can receive knowledge only through these physical channels, can never really comprehend spiritual concepts and principles without the Holy Spirit of God. The greatest minds—scientific, philosophical minds—cannot really come to know and understand SPIRITUAL truths with their natural minds.

Just as surely as no animal brain—such as that of a cow, for example—can comprehend or understand human affairs, so no human mind can have comprehension of spiritual things on the divine plane unless and until it has received the Holy Spirit of God! (More about the function and receiving of the Holy Spirit will be containted in a forthcoming lesson.) Origin of the "Big Lie" The truth about the "spirit in man" is so important that Satan tried to twist and warp and pervert it long ago. He clouded the minds of men and got them to believing his "big lie" as far back as the time of Adam and Eve. In the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived Eve. Notice what happened:

1. What did Satan tell Eve? Genesis 3:4.

COMMENT: Here was the origin of the "immortality of the soul" doctrine preached today! Satan told Eve she would "not surely die"—in other words, she had an "immortal soul" that would live forever. Eve swallowed this lie, hook, line and sinker.

2. Has Satan deceived the WHOLE world? Revelation 12:9.

COMMENT: The devil has deceived the whole world on nearly every point of God’s truth! And virtually the entire world today believes some variation of the ancient "big lie." Millions have been deluded to believe in reincarnation or the transmigration of souls as a result of the false doctrine of an ever-living soul.

Satan has deceived the world with a COUNTERFEIT doctrine—a doctrine that perverts the truth about the "spirit in man." With his cunning counterfeit, Satan has withheld from the minds of MILLIONS the truth about the "spirit in man," and the need for a resurrection from the dead!

Only GOD Is Immortal!

We have clearly seen that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul. But what, then, does the Bible teach about immortality?

1. According to 1 Timothy 6:15-16,who alone has immortality inherently?

2. Is God also incorruptible? 1 Timothy 1:17,and see comment.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated "immortal" here is aphthartos, meaning "incorruptible." God is incorruptible. Man is not.

3. Now turn to 1 Corinthians 15:53-54. Do these two verses say that man is already immortal? What must man put on? 1 Corinthians 15:53. When will man be "clothed" with immortality? 1 Corinthians 15:52. Does this happen at the time of the resurrection? 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

4. Who brought to mankind the knowledge of how to receive eternal life and immortality (incorruption)? 2 Timothy 1:10.Doesn't this verse plainly show that immortality is something man does not already have? Then is the Gospel also the good news about how to receive immortality? Same verse.

5. Is immortality to be sought for? Romans 2:7.Is eternal life a free gift bestowed on those who seek immortality? Same verse and Romans 6:23.

6. Was David still alive as an immortal soul after he died? Acts 2:29,Acts 2:34. Will David, King of Israel, be raised from the dead? Jeremiah 30:9.

Why a Resurrection?

If man were an immortal soul in a material body—and if the death of the body released the soul—then there would be no need for a resurrection to immortal life. Man would merely continue living after death. But the very fact that the Bible teaches the resurrection from the dead is further proof that man does not have an immortal soul!

1. If Christ had not risen from the dead, would faith in a future life by a resurrection be all in vain? 1 Corinthians 15:14-17.If there will be no resurrection, have those who are dead in their graves perished forever? 1 Corinthians 15:18.

2. However, did Christ Himself warn that the unregenerate—unrepentant—man is to perish? John 3:16 and Luke 13:3,Luke 13:5. If man were an immortal soul, could he actually "perish"? (See in your dictionary that the word "perish" means to CEASE living.)

3. Who will hear the voice of the Son of God at the resurrection? John 5:25.Do they then "rise"? 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

COMMENT: The dead cannot "hear" unless they are first restored to life! The dead are pictured throughout the Bible as being asleep in their graves, awaiting the day of the resurrection. Notice Jesus' words when describing the death of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha:

"'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.' Then said his disciples, 'Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.' Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, 'Lazarus isdead'" (John 11:11-14).

Death is pictured as a sleep. Death, like sleep, is a condition in which people are not conscious and from which they shall be "awakened"!

Notice the plain evidence of Scripture:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2). "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (Matthew 27:52). "And when thy days be fulfilled," said God to David, "and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers..." (2 Samuel 7:12).

Death is described as a sleep dozens of times in the Bible when referring to the kings of Israel and Judah! "David slept with his fathers..." (1 Kings 2:10). Notice that it does not say "the body slept while the soul was conscious." It plainly says, "David slept." It was the conscious person who fell

"asleep" in death! In the following verses the same expression is used to describe death. Look each one up and see for yourself that death is compared to a sleep: 1 Kings 11:21,1 Kings 11:43;1 Kings 14:20,1 Kings 14:31;1 Kings 15:8,1 Kings 15:24;1 Kings 16:6,1 Kings 16:28;1 Kings 22:40,1 Kings 22:50; 2 Kings 8:24;2 Kings 10:35;2 Kings 13:9,2 Kings 13:13;2 Kings 14:16,2 Kings 14:22, 2 Kings 14:29;2 Kings 15:7,2 Kings 15:22, 2 Kings 15:28;2 Kings 16:20;2 Kings 20:21;2 Kings 21:18;2 Kings 24:6;2 Chronicles 9:31;2 Chronicles 12:16;2 Chronicles 14:1;2 Chronicles 16:13;2 Chronicles 21:1;2 Chronicles 26:2;2 Chronicles 27:9;2 Chronicles 28:27;2 Chronicles 32:33;2 Chronicles 33:20.

Certainly here is conclusive evidence that the dead are not conscious—that they have no conscious "immortal souls"!

Man to BECOME Spirit

1. Job once asked the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" What was Job's answer to his own question? Job 14:14.What was the change Job spoke of, and when will it take place? 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

2. What will Job, David and all those in the resurrection be like? Will they be like God? Psalms 17:15.Is God spirit? John 4:24.Are they therefore to be composed of spirit then? 1 Corinthians 15:42-49.Compare this with 1 John 3:2.

3. Why were Adam and Eve not permitted to eat the fruit of the "tree of [eternal] life" after they sinned? Genesis 3:22-24.Note last part of Genesis 3:22.

COMMENT: Adam and Eve could have eventually gained eternal life and become spirit by eating of the fruit of the "tree of life." This plainly shows that Adam and Eve did not have immortality inherent in themselves! The "tree of life" symbolized the Holy Spirit—the way to eternal life. Adam was created incomplete. He was created to need the Holy Spirit of God in order to live forever. Had Adam and Eve eaten of the fruit of that tree, rather than of the forbidden tree, they would have received God's Spirit as a begettal. The Holy Spirit would have helped perfect the very character of God in them, and finally changed their mortal bodies into spirit-born Sons of God!

Adam, however, had to choose whether or not he would accept the free gift of the Holy Spirit. He chose (1 Timothy 2:14,first part), by disobeying God, not to receive the Holy Spirit and was consequently cut off from access to the tree of life! Here is yet another proof that no man has eternal life inherent within himself. When Did Paul Expect to Be With Christ?

Some who believe that Christians have an immortal soul use Php 1:23-24 as proof. Do these verses overthrow all of the plain scriptures we have studied? Let's understand what Paul meant.

1. Did Paul have a desire to be with Christ? Php 1:23.

COMMENT: All Christians should have the same desire. But does this verse state when Paul would be with Christ? Absolutely not! But people try to read certain ideas into this verse! Let's notice when Paul expected to be with Christ.

2. Did Paul expect to receive something from Christ when he met Him? 2 Timothy 4:6-8.And when would that be—the time when Jesus returns and all the saints are resurrected? 2 Timothy 4:8.

Notice the words "at that day."

3. When Christ returns, will He bring His rewards with Him? Isaiah 40:10;Revelation 22:12.When will all (both dead and living) Christians "meet the Lord"? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

COMMENT: Those who are dead in their graves are not conscious; they have no knowledge of passing time. The very next moment of their consciousness will be the time of the resurrection! That is why Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10:"Wherefore we labour [while yet alive], that, whether present [alive in the flesh] or absent [dead in the grave], we may be accepted of him." When?

2 Corinthians 5:10 tells—at the judgment when Christ returns! That is when Paul expected to receive the reward of his labors and to be with Christ. God will judge us at Christ's coming (2 Timothy 4:1)--at the resurrection from the dead—the awesome event every true Christian eagerly looks forward to!

"Body, Soul and Spirit"

There are also some who claim that man is "body, soul and spirit." But which of the two—the soul or the spirit—is immortal, even they never seem quite sure! Let's understand this expression.

1. What does the Bible reveal about "body, soul and spirit"? 1 Thessalonians 5:23.Does this verse really prove the "immortality of the soul"? Of course not! It does not contradict all the plain verses we have already studied (John 10:35).

COMMENT: Paul here refered to the MIND in man when he used the word "spirit." And to the PHYSICAL LIFE when he used the word "soul." And to the FLESH when he used the word "body."

What's wrong with having your whole mind, your life, and your body preserved blameless—preserved from the penalty of sin—in anticipation of the coming of Christ? (See also 2 Corinthians 7:1.) Nothing! That is something we should all fervently desire!

How plain the Bible really is. Man is MORTAL, corruptible flesh—organic matter with a temporary life. He has no eternal life inherent within himself—no "immortal soul"! He is a physical, fleshly creature destined to die and turn to dust and remain that way—except for the intervention of the Almighty. But God has sent His Son to make it possible for us to receive the GIFT of immortality and eternal life at the resurrection from the dead! Will you qualify to receive that wonderful gift? In a soon-coming lesson we will study the glorious promises, and the great rewards, that God holds out for all mankind.

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle, or underline each correct answer. After you've finished, check your choices with the correct answers listed at the end of the test, and then rate yourself.

1. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul came from A. the Old Testament. B. Jewish tradition. C. the Apostle Paul principally. D. pagan Egyptian and Greek philosophers.

2. "Death is merely the separation of soul and body" is a quotation from A. Plato. B. The Bible. C. the Koran. D. Benjamin Franklin.

3. Science reveals A. that an immaterial soul does exist in man. B. that spirit things are a myth. C. nothing whatever about the spiritual realm. D. that the soul is able to think independently of the body.

4. God created man A. out of dust and spirit. B. from the dust of the ground. C. with an "immortal soul" within him. D. not subject to death and decay.

5. The "breath of life" A. was not the element that gave Adam life and kept him living. B. is also necessary to keep animals alive. C. was an immortal soul God gave Adam. D. was not the only thing God breathed into the first man.

6. The Bible does NOT say: A. Man became a living soul. B. Beasts and men all go to the same place at death. C. Death befalls man and beast alike. D. The soul cannot die.

7. The word "spirit" in the Bible A. often refers to the soul. B. always means the Holy Spirit, or angels. C. may sometimes refer to the mind, attitude or character of a man. D. is never used when a better translation would have been "breath."

8. The Bible mentions A. dead souls. B. immortal souls. C. spirit souls. D. invisible souls.

9. Death is figuratively described in the Bible as a sleep because A. the dead will never awake. B. the dead are temporarily unconscious. C. the body is resting while it is separated from the soul. D. hell is like a bad dream or nightmare.

10. The expression "body, soul and spirit" A. proves that something in man is immortal and eternally conscious. B. means the flesh, the life and the mind. C. is actually redundant phraseology. D. is not found in the Bible.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. The Hebrew word nephesh, often translated "soul," is also translated "creature" when it refers to animals. T F

12. The Bible does speak of the "spirit in man," but this spirit is not an immortal soul that consciously lives on after death. T F 13. The Hebrew word ruach (in the Old Testament) can mean either the material air or wind, or invisible spirit. T F 14. According to the Bible, man is mortal, not immortal. T F 15. There is no need for a resurrection because man continues to live on forever as an immortal soul. T F Draw a line from each numbered phrase to the correctly related lettered phrase.

16. The dead

A. Immortal soul

B. Praising God

17. Life of all flesh

C. Unconsious

D. Immortal

18. Christ’s "soul"

E. Poured out

F. In the blood

19. Man’s uniqueness

G. Not really dead

H. Eternal death

20. God’s gift

I Eternal life

J The spirit in man

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-D 5-B 9-B 13-T 17-F 19-20 correct - - - excellent 2-A 6-D 10-B 14-T 18-E 16-18 correct - - - good 3-C 7-C 11-T 15-F 19-J 13-15 correct - - - fair 4-B 8-A 12-T 16-C 20-I

Lesson 06

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 6 What is "Hell"?

Even if you are a faithful, believing Christian, you may go to hell! Many of your loved ones are right now in hell! But don’t be alarmed. You probably have never heard the TRUTH about what "hell" really is—and where most ideas on the subject came from. Just what does the Bible teach about "hell"?MILLIONS are in confusion about "hell." What is it? Where is it? Who really goes there? And why? Is "hell" a literal place—a geographical location? Is it somewhere in the interior of the earth, in the heart of the sun, in remote space? A Gallup survey in 1967 showed that 68 percent of Americans believe in heaven, but only 54 percent are persuaded of the reality of hell. Why the difference?

Probably because many of those who believe in a heaven simply cannot bring themselves to think that a merciful, loving God would consign anyone to a place of eternal torment!

Common Ideas of Hell A survey in New Zealand indicated that 60 percent of New Zealanders believe hell is simply a state of mind. Only 26 percent believe hell is a literal place. In San Francisco, random passers-by were asked: "How do you picture hell?" Some of the answers reveal the utter confusion surrounding the subject in the minds of the public.

First person: "Honestly, I have doubts there is such a place. I feel hell is a means of scaring people so they will lead a better life....If there is such a place, I suppose it is craggy and filled with people feeding furnaces or breaking rocks."

Second person: "The idea of hell is one of the greatest means in the world for teaching children good. Personally, however, I think it is just a Biblical term."

Third person: "When I was young I had a clear picture of what hell is like—flames and a devil with horns and a pitchfork. But a person gets over this, just as he does with Santa Claus." Fourth person: "I would rather not think about it."

Fifth person: "I have never thought of it except as I have seen it staged in operas or plays."

Sixth person: "I picture hell as a big, hot, uncomfortable desert. I think it does exist. Not down in the ground. But since someone put us here, then he could easily have a place for us afterward."

Seventh person: "Hell is a place of unhappy confinement, like a prison. Not necessarily with flames. More a torment of the spirit. I believe it is an actual area, although not necessarily down any more than heaven must be up."

Here are many vague ideas about hell, but almost no real knowledge. Probably the clear majority are those who would just "rather not think about it"!

What the Clergy Thinks

Many theologians today do not believe in a literal "hell." Said one:"The essence of hell is separation from God—not really torture, but torment." Another described hell as "a condition of human existence."

One minister claimed hell is "the loss of communication, insensitivity to spiritual values, the realization of how far short of our capacities we have fallen, the memory of some of the things we have done."What abysmal confusion!

Isn’t it time we learned the TRUTH of the Bible? The "Fiery Inferno"

Most everyone assumes one of two extremes concerning "hell." One group totally denies that hell exists. Hell is passed off as an ancient superstition which has no bearing whatever on modern life. The other group, including most so-called Bible fundamentalists, pictures hell as a terrible place of never-ending torment where the devil rules and his demons gleefully "roast" sinners like millions of wieners on a barbecue spit. There is bitter weeping and wailing, agonized cursing, shrieks and screams from those in eternal torment—according to this concept.

Here is the terse summation of this popular belief from the Encyclopedia Americana:

"As generally understood, hell is the abode of evil spirits; the infernal regions...whither lost and condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and eternal punishment.... Some have thought of it as the place created by the Deity, where He punishes, with inconceivable severity, and through all eternity, the souls of those who through unbelief or through the worship of false gods have angered Him. It is the place of divine revenge, untempered, NEVER ENDING. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike. It is also the idea embodied in the Mohammedan’s conception....The main feature of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians are essentially the same" (from the article on "Hell," emphasis ours throughout lesson) But why do people believe what they believe? From where or from whom have these popular ideas come? From the Philosophers A few prominent religious leaders of the Middle Ages left writings and teachings which were so universally believed that they became the accepted doctrine of the Christian-professing world. One of the most important of these influential writers was Augustine (345-430 A.D.).

Augustine reasoned that there should be a temporary cleansing of imperfect souls in purgatorial fire. He, like other influential men of the Christian-professing church, were influenced by "pre-Christian doctrine"—the doctrine of the ancient pagan philosophers and other early church fathers (see Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., article "Purgatory").

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), wrote a tremendously popular poem, La Commedia, in three parts—Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Although Dante’s purpose for writing his Commedia was to ridicule the religious concepts of hell which were prevalent during his day, his writing nevertheless tremendously influenced popular though and teaching. "Of all poets of modern times," says a modern author, "Dante Alighieri was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of civilization than any other man since his day...he wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal hell—a long poem containing certain phrases which caught the attention of the world, such as ‘all hope abandon...ye, who enter here!’...His ‘Inferno’ was based on Virgil and Plato" (Dante and His Inferno). And so Dante wrote from the ideas and concepts of the philosophers Plato and Virgil and the prevalent

"Christian" concepts of his day. But who were Plato and Virgil?

Says the Encyclopedia Americana: "Virgil, pagan poet, 70-19 B.C., belonged to the national school of pagan Roman thought, influenced by the Greek writers. Christians of the Middle Ages...believed he had received some measure of divine inspiration."

Plato, born in Athens, Greece, 427 B.C., was a student of the renowned Socrates. Plato's famous literary work Phaedo taught the immorality of the soul—the foundation for other writings on the doctrine of an eternal hell where wicked "souls" are supposedly punished forever. So the world's concept of "hell" is admittedly a product of human thinking—of pagan speculation—as men puzzled over the eventual fate of the wicked.

What About the Billions of Mankind?

Before we examine the Bible to see whether the common ideas about hell could be true, let us consider where this concept of hell, if true, would lead us. On this earth there are more than three billion people. The most populous lands are China, India, and others parts of Asia. But in spite of the efforts of Western missionaries, more than half of all the people on the earth have never so much as heard the only name by which men may be saved (Acts 4:12)--the name of "Jesus Christ"!

Literally billions of people on this earth have lived and died without having known anything about "salvation"—without ever having seen a Bible.

Now think what that means. If all the "unsaved" go immediately to a fiery hell at death, then more than half the people who have ever lived on this earth have been consigned to this terrible punishment without ever having had a chance to escape it! Can you really believe that is the method an all-wise, all-merciful loving God is using to work out His purpose here below?

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

We face these alternatives: Either the Creator reveals the TRUTH on this subject in His inspired Word, or else we must fling up our hands and confess we just don't know. Either we believe what the Bible says, or we must—if we are rational and honest—admit ignorance.

What does God say about "hell" in the Bible? You may be surprised! So be sure to read all of the scripture references given in this lesson, and PROVE the truth from the Bible with your own eyes.

LESSON 6 Christ Spoke of "Hell Fire"

1. In His parable-like illustration, what punishment did Christ warn would ultimately befall those who refuse to quit sinning—refuse to stop using (obviously not literally "cut off") various of their members to commit sin? Mark 9:43.

COMMENT: "hell" is an English word. When Mark recorded Christ's words, he wrote them in the Greek language. The Greek word translated "hell," which Mark was inspired to write down, is gehenna. Since in this verse Christ says the sinner is "to go into hell, into the fire," it follows that those who go to gehenna will receive punishment by fire.

Keep in mind then that Christ associated the Greek word gehenna with fire.

2. What did Christ say in Mark 9:45 to emphasize what He said in Mark 9:43?

COMMENT: Mark wrote down the same Greek word gehenna here in Mark 9:45 that he used in Mark 9:43. The translators of the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible of A.D. 1611 selected the English word "hell" to represent this Greek word gehenna. We will learn more about the real meaning of this word later.

3. How did Christ re-emphasize what He said about "hell fire"? Mark 9:47.

COMMENT: Again, the Greek word which Mark used in this verse is gehenna. Gehenna clearly refers to fire! But there are other words in the Bible also translated "hell."

English Word "Hell" Misapplied

Let’s read what A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, says about the use of the word "hell" in the Old and New Testaments. Keep in mind, as you read this, that the Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language, and that the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language.

Hastings says: "In our Authorized Version the word hell is unfortunately used as the rendering of three distinct words, with DIFFERENT IDEAS [Or meanings]. It represents,

1) the ‘sheol’ of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the ‘hades’ in the New Testament.... It is now an entirely misleading rendering, especially in the New Testament passages. The English revisers, therefore, have substituted ‘hades’ [going back to the original Greek word] for ‘hell’ in the New Testament.... In the American revision the word ‘hell’ is entirely discarded in this connection.... "The word ‘hell’ is used 2) as equivalent to [the Greek word] ‘tartaros’ (2 Peter 2:4)...and, 3)...as the equivalent of [the Greek word] ‘gehenna’...." So we see that the real meanings of three different Greek words—hades (equivalent to the Hebrew sheol of the Old Testament), tartaros and gehenna --have been confused with each other because translators have attempted to make the one English word "hell" cover the definitions of all three words! No wonder confusion has reigned in the minds of millions. What do these words really mean? The original Old Testament Hebrew word sheol and the New Testament Greek word hades mean the same thing—simply the grave. These original words have been translated "grave" in many places in the Bible. "Hell" is an old English word, and over 350 years ago when the Authorized Version was translated, the people of England commonly talked of "putting their potatoes in hell for the winter"—a good way of preserving potatoes—for the word then meant merely A HOLE IN THE GROUND which was covered up—a dark and silent place—a grave! But pagan teachings gaining popular acceptance have caused people to misapply the old English word "hell" to the lurid imaginations of Dante. The second Greek word, tartaros, which has also been translated into the English word "hell," occurs only once in the New Testament, (2 Peter 2:4)and does not refer to humans, but to the restrained condition of fallen angels. Its meaning, translated into English, is "darkness of the material universe," or "dark abyss," or "prison." But what about gehenna? This Greek word, as all authorities admit, is derived from the name of the narrow, rocky Valley of Hinnom which lay just outside Jerusalem. It was the place where refuse was constantly burned up. Trash, filth, and the dead bodies of animals and despised criminals were thrown into the fires of gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom. Ordinarily, everything thrown into this valley was destroyed by fire—COMPLETELY BURNED UP. Therefore, Christ used gehenna to picture the terrible fate of unrepentant sinners!

Two Different "Hells" In most of the passages of the New Testament where we see the word "hell," the original Greek word is not gehenna. Most often it is hades—which does not refer to fire at all, but to a grave—a hole in the ground. Yet the translators have confused and obliterated the two entirely separate meanings of these words by indiscriminately rendering them both by the same English word "hell."Let’s study the proof.

1. What can we learn from Luke 12:5 about "hell"?

COMMENT: If you were to look up the original Creek word that is here translated into the English word "hell," you would find it is gehenna. Gehenna, then, is plainly a place where bodies are thrown and, as Christ indicated, DESTROYED BY FIRE!

2. But now notice the same English word "hell" in Acts 2:31?

COMMENT: The original Greek word which is translated by the English word "hell" in Acts 2:31 is hades. Hades means the "grave," as its usage in this verse clearly shows! We can plainly see that the English word "hell" can have different meanings! So when we come to the word "hell" in the New Testament, we must keep in mind these two vastly different meanings and carefully determine by the context whether it refers to destruction by fire, or the grave where the dead lie buried.

Whenever you’re in doubt about the intended meaning of the word "hell" in the New Testament, look it up in an exhaustive concordance, such as Strong’s or Young’s, to see which Greek word it was translated from, and hence its true meaning. Where to After Death? In the preceding lesson we learned that when a person dies and is interred in his grave, he knows absolutely nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5). He merely lies quietly and silently there as in a "sleep," totally oblivious to everything.Let’s briefly review this important truth.

1. What one thing befalls both men and beasts? Ecclesiastes 3:19.Do they all go to one place—the same place—when they die? Ecclesiastes 3:20 and Genesis 3:19.

COMMENT: Have you ever heard of beasts going to "hell" to be tortured?

2. What place does God say man goes to when he dies? Ecclesiastes 9:10.Did Job realize he would go to the grave after death? Job 17:13.

3. Was the One who became Jesus Christ "made flesh"? John 1:14.Did Christ take upon Himself the same mortal flesh of which we are composed? Hebrews 2:14.And didn’t He also have to go to the grave as other mortal men do? Turn to Acts 2:31 once again.

COMMENT: The original Greek word in Acts 2:31 is hades which, as you now know, means the "grave." Jesus’ "soul" (body) did not see corruption (did not decompose in the grave) because He was resurrected after three days!

Some theologians, however, maintain the tradition that Christ was preaching to departed human "spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19)while He was in "hell." That idea is absolutely false. 1 Peter 3:20 makes it plain that those to whom Christ preached (concerning their rebellious activities on earth) were demon spirits, and that He preached to them during the days of Noah! This verse is not talking about the three days and nights Jesus was dead in the grave at all!

Resurrected to "Judgment"

You may have heard ministers preach that sinners go directly to the fiery tortures of "hell" when they die. But this would mean they are condemned to "hell" before they are formally judged and sentenced! Let’s notice when the wicked dead are judged by God.

1. When will the dead be judged? John 5:28-29.

COMMENT: Christ said the judgment of the wicked dead, who are now in their graves, is yet in the future. "The hour is coming," said Jesus. Then how could they now be receiving punishment when they have not, as yet, even been judged? The two ideas clearly contradict each other! When will the dead be judged? Obviously after they come up from their graves in a resurrection!

2. While they are in their graves—until the day of their resurrection—are those who have already proved themselves to be unjust "reserved" for a future time of formal sentencing and punishment? 2 Peter 2:9.

3. Does Revelation 20:13 also prove there is to be a future resurrection to judgment?

COMMENT: Notice that those who are in watery graves (the sea) are to be resurrected; and those who were killed by other means and left unburied ("death") are to be resurrected; and those who are in earthy graves ("hell"—the Greek word here is hades which means the grave) are also to be resurrected at this time. So all the wicked dead on land or in the sea, wherever they may be, are to be resurrected to "JUDGMENT" in the future. That is when God will formally sentence them! No one is, or ever has been, down in a fiery "hell" dancing around on hot coals, shrieking in terror and torment! God’s time for judging and condemning the wicked has not yet arrived! How clear! The whole question of "judgment" is thoroughly dealt with in supplementary reading material offered in conjunction with this Correspondence Course. Suffice it to say here that the Bible clearly shows that the time the wicked are condemned to their fate is IN THE FUTURE. The idea that wicked "souls" are right now suffering torments in a fiery hell is a pagan myth!

Death By Fire

What is the ultimate penalty—the "wages," or reward—of sin? Is it eternal life in torment? Or is it eternal oblivion? What is the ultimate FATE of the wicked? The Bible makes the truth very clear.

1. What is the "wages of sin"? Romans 6:23.

COMMENT: The "wages of sin is DEATH." "Death" is the opposite of "life"! The final wages the incorrigible wicked will receive, then, is simply the complete cessation of life!

2. What does Paul warn will be the judgment or sentence of those who, knowing God’s commands and having tasted of His way of life, willfully sin against Him? Hebrews 10:26-27.Will such persons live on in torment in fire—or will they be "devoured" by it? Hebrews 10:27. Notice that this judgment comes on people because they sin willfully.

3. Does Jesus compare false ministers who don’t bring forth good works to trees that don’t bring forth "good fruit"? Matthew 7:15-19.What did He say would happen to such people? Matthew 7:19. Is wood put into a fire to be tormented-or to be burned up? Did Christ clearly indicate that all people who do not bring forth good fruit will likewise be cast into fire? Matthew 7:17-19.

4. What did Christ say to the unrepentant scribes and Pharisees of His day? Matthew 23:33.

COMMENT: The original Greek word translated here as "hell" is gehenna—meaning the Valley of Hinnom. Christ used the fire that burned up refuse in the Valley of Hinnom as a type of the final fate—complete destruction—of the wicked by fire. Those rebellious and stubborn religious leaders could well understand Christ's analogy. They knew they were being threatened with complete destruction as just so much trash!

5. What did Christ warn would happen to those who will not repent of their sinful ways? Luke 13:3.

COMMENT: "Perish" means to cease existing. It does not mean to continue living. Life in eternal torment is not what God has decreed for incorrigible sinners! The punishment revealed in the Bible is death—cessation of life forever. Eternal life is something we were NOT born with. It is a gift of God which He will bestow at the resurrection to those who obey Him. Eternal Life and death are contrasted all through your Bible!

6. Did Christ show by His parable of the tares that there is to be a future harvest? Matthew 13:30.Did He say the evil people—the "tares"—will afterward be BURNED? Same verse.

COMMENT: In this parable Christ likened the earth to a "field" (Matthew 13:24), the obedient people to "wheat" (Matthew 13:25, Matthew 13:29), and the disobedient to "tares" (Matthew 13:25, Matthew 13:29-30).

7. Does Psalms 37:20 also show the ultimate fate of the wicked will be destruction by fire? Is there coming a time that will be extremely hot—so hot that it will burn up—CONSUME—the wicked? Malachi 4:1.What will be left of the wicked? Malachi 4:3.Who will burn the wicked up—Satan and his demons, or the Eternal God? Same verse.

COMMENT: The "hell fire" that the Bible speaks of will be thousands of degrees HOTTER than the imaginary "hell fire" of most preachers—which is only hot enough to torment. The Biblical "hell fire" will totally consume the disobedient! Never will they exist again. The Bible plainly shows that those who have known God's truth and still refuse to obey it, or willfully disobey, will reap the wages of sin—eternal death! (Romans 6:23). This scripture means what it says. The attempts of many theologians to "explain away" death and to "interpret" it as mere "separation from God" cannot be reconciled with Scripture. Death clearly does NOT mean "eternal life" in the horrifying torments of an eternal "hell." The author of this pagan deception is none other than the father of lies—Satan the devil! (John 8:44). If you have innocently believed his doctrine and have suffered mental torment because of it, thank God that He has opened your mind to understand the TRUTH!

What Is the "Lake of Fire"? And now comes a most interesting revelation! Exactly what is the gehenna fire that will consume the wicked? When and where will it occur?

Forget all the ideas you may previously have been led to believe. Read now in your own Bible what God reveals. For "hell fire" does not even exist yet!

1. Are all who stubbornly refuse to repent and persist in breaking God's commandments ultimately to find themselves in a lake of "fire and brimstone"? Revelation 21:8.

COMMENT: We've already seen that the fate of the wicked is gehenna fire. So gehenna and the lake of fire are the same. A very large fire would have the appearance of a fiery lake, hence its description.

2. Will it cause the death of the wicked? Notice Revelation 21:8 once again. Which death will it cause? Same verse.

COMMENT: Mortals naturally die once, because we just "wear out" (Hebrews 9:27). But if anyone dies the second death, that individual will have been judged by God to be guilty of persistent disobedience and incorrigible rebellion. The second death will be for all eternity!

3. Does Revelation 20:13-14 verify the fact that all who are incorrigible will be cast into this future lake of fire—not now, but after the coming judgment? Will all mortals whose names will not have been written in the book of (eternal) life be cast into the lake of fire? Revelation 20:15.

4. When does the lake of fire actually begin—at Christ's second coming? Revelation 19:20.Will the two chief enemies of Christ be cast into it at that time? Same verse.

5. How long will this fire last? Matthew 25:41.

COMMENT: The word "everlasting" is aionion in the Greek. Aionion comes from the root aion which often means "age." In this case, the correct translation into the English language should be "AGE-LASTING fire." This "lake of fire" is going to be burning all during the Millennium—the "age" of Christ's rule.

During the millennial reign of Christ and His saints, the Valley of Hinnom will once more be kept perpetually burning—and the incorrigibly wicked ones who set their WILL to persist in rebellion against God's laws will be THROWN INTO this fire as a stern witness to all the rest of the world! (Isaiah 66:24).

6. Much later—after the Millennium—will the flames of the "lake of fire" purify the earth's surface, burning in one vast worldwide holocaust? 2 Peter 3:10.Will all the things man has created be burned up, as well as the rest of those People who will not have received salvation and eternal life because of willful rebellion against God? Same verse and Revelation 20:15 once again.

COMMENT: Here is God's—not man's—description of what the final "hell fire" will be like! It is yet in the future. It has not yet occurred. Nothing is said anywhere in the entire Bible about "souls" descending beneath the earth into "hell fire," or of torture for all eternity! Rather, the Bible shows that all incorrigible human beings and their works will suffer destruction once for all eternity. All other teachings to the contrary have come to us from paganism!

7. Are the wicked to be reduced to ashes by the fire which will consume the earth's surface? Turn to Malachi 4:3 once again. Can ashes be tormented forever and ever? Of course not! The death they will have suffered will be an eternal, everlasting punishment, not an everlasting punishing by torment. There is a big difference between punishment and punishing! The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), not eternal life in hell fire!

8. What is meant in Revelation 20:14 by the words, "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire"?

COMMENT: The original Greek word here translated "hell" is hades. Only unrepentant sinners—those who refuse to obey God—will still be mortal at the time of this resurrection. There will be no one else who could die. Therefore, death and the grave will both cease to exist when the lake of fire engulfs the entire surface of the earth.

9. What will Satan’s part be in this coming "hell fire"? Revelation 20:10.

COMMENT: Satan will be cast into the same conflagration that will destroy all incorrigible mortals. But since he is a spirit being, he will not be destroyed by the flames (see Luke 20:36)

Notice that Satan himself will be in "hell fire." He will not play the role of torturing people as he is often represented by the doctrines of this world. Revelation 20:10 shows Satan himself is to be TORMENTED unto the ages of the ages—"FOREVER AND EVER"! His torment will last forever. But not this fire. It will last only as long as combustible material remains to be consumed. Satan’s torment, however, will continue forever as a mental anguish resulting from seeing all that he has striven toward, worked for, plotted for, burned up as the earth is purified by fire!

10. Will the "beast" and "false prophet" still be in this fire? Revelation 20:10.

COMMENT: Some Bibles use italics to show that the word "are" in this verse was supplied by the translators. It is not found in the Greek manuscripts. The phrase should read, "where the beast and the false prophet were"—the unwritten verb being understood to be in the same tense as the verb in the first half of the sentence. The Amplified Bible has it correct. These two mortal individuals will have been destroyed over 1,000 years before the time Satan is put into these flames.

Hell Fire "Never Quenched"?

1. Did John the Baptist ever speak of "unquenchable fire"? Matthew 3:12;Luke 3:17.

2. Did Jesus say that hell fire will never be "quenched"? Mark 9:43-48.(Recall the Greek word for "hell" in Mark 9:43, Mark 9:45 and Mark 9:47 is gehenna.)

COMMENT: Jesus repeated this statement five times for emphasis. From this, people have carelessly assumed the "fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:43) is a fire of torture which has been in existence for centuries, and will continue to exist for eternity.

We have proved that this idea is absolutely false! Notice God’s own inspired explanation of unquenchable hell fire.

3. Did God (over 2,500 years ago) warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem that He would kindle a fire in Jerusalem’s gates that would not be quenched? Jeremiah 17:27.But what would that fire do to the city’s palaces? Same verse.

COMMENT: This fire occurred a few years later, and it destroyed all the houses of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:13). Since God said this fire "shall not be quenched" and since it is not burning today, it obviously went out by itself after accomplishing its purpose—after devouring all combustible material!

4. What punishment befell the notorious cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Genesis 19:24.Was it literal fire that destroyed human beings? Luke 17:29.What do we read in Jude 1:7 about this event? Is there still a fire burning in those cities which God destroyed long ago? Of course not!

COMMENT: The expression "eternal fire" used in Jude 1:7 means a fire whose results are permanent or everlasting—obviously not a fire that burns forever! Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed centuries ago—they are not burning today. The fires which burned these cities simply died out after consuming all combustible material. These scriptures prove the "fire that shall not be quenched" will NOT torment people forever and ever!

Christ, as we have seen, often referred to the fires that burned in the Valley of Hinnom at the edge of Jerusalem to illustrate the final "hell fire" or gehenna which is to consume the wicked. But did those fires ever go out? The fact is, they were kept burning as long as there was refuse to burn. Then they burned themselves out!

They were never quenched or put out prematurely by anyone! The flames merely died out when they had nothing more to consume. Even so it will be with the FINAL gehenna fire. It will be unquenched—but it will finally burn itself out!

"Worm That Dieth Not" A startling statement is found in Mark 9:44,Mark 9:46 and Mark 9:48. In these verses, Christ spoke of a worm that "dieth not. " Are there really immortal worms?

Some people think Jesus referred to people as worms, and that He was trying to say that these "people" never die but live on forever in agonizing torment. However, those who believe this fail to notice that what Jesus spoke of was "their worm." So the wicked themselves are not the "worm."

What is this mysterious "worm" that does not die? Notice what Jesus really meant.

Jesus clearly had reference, as the marginal notes of many Bibles show, to Isaiah 66:24,where a similar statement is made about "their worm"—the worm of dead "carcasses." (Be sure to read this verse in your Bible.)

Now what is the "worm" of a dead , decaying carcass? If you have ever seen a putrefying carcass, the answer should be obvious. To put the matter beyond all doubt, we find that the lexicons define grub or maggot both the Greek and the Hebrew words translated as "worm" in Mark 9:44 and Isaiah 66:24. When a dead body occasionally lodged on one of the rocky ledges above the garbage fires of the Valley of Hinnom, it was soon infested by many worms or maggots which hatched out of eggs laid by flies. It was simply these worms to which Christ referred when He said, "their worm dieth not." But Jesus didn’t mean that each individual worm continued to live forever! Actually, the larvae—maggots—would hatch from eggs, eat the flesh, continue in the larval form only a few days, then go through pupation or metamorphosis and finally emerge as flies! The worms didn’t die—they became flies! Later, the flies died.

These are facts known by any student of biology! And Christ was not ignorant of them. By contrast, the misunderstanding of Christ’s simple statement by some people should be an object lesson to always be careful to use wisdom and common sense in studying God’s Word. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). The Bible is one book that makes good sense! Let’s always study these perplexing scriptures carefully and not jump to hasty, erroneous, weird conclusions. The Story of "Lazarus and the Rich Man"

Jesus' story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31)is perhaps one of the most outstanding texts used by those who attempt to prove there is an eternal hell fire.

What lesson did Jesus intend to illustrate by this strange story? Let's carefully study this story word by word, comparing it with other crystal-clear scriptures.

1. Did Lazarus—a poor but righteous beggar—die? Luke 16:22.Was he later carried by angels to "Abraham's bosom"? Same verse.

COMMENT: If we are Christ's, God considers us Abraham's "seed"—descendants or children—and we become heirs with Abraham to receive the promises God made to him (Galatians 3:29). Through faith we may all become "children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). This is an intimate relationship—a close or bosom relationship, spiritually speaking—with Abraham. We are to be in close contact with him in sharing the promises. This is the sense in which righteous Lazarus was taken to "Abraham's bosom."

When, then, will Abraham and the Lazarus of our story actually receive the fulfillment of the promises? The answer of the Bible is that Abraham and the saints—his "seed"—will inherit the promises at the resurrection of the just when Jesus Christ returns to earth to establish the Kingdom of God! (We will study more about the subject of the Christian's inheritance in the next lesson.)

2. And what about the sinful rich man of Jesus' parable? Did he also die? Luke 16:22.And do we next see him lifting up his eyes, indicating his having been resurrected, and calling to Abraham for a few drops of water to cool his tongue, being in mental torment? Luke 16:23-24.

COMMENT: The word "hell" used here is translated from the original Greek word hades, which we know means the "grave." It is not from the Greek word gehenna, which represents the future lake of fire that will DESTROY the wicked forever. The rich man is pictured at the very moment of his coming up out of his GRAVE in a resurrection!

Abraham and Lazarus will have already inherited eternal life in God's Kingdom (Matthew 25:34). They will have been immortal for over 1,000 years BEFORE the wicked rich man is resurrected to be burned in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:4-5,15). Until then, the rich man will have been dead in his grave, having no consciousness of the passing time (Ecclesiastes 9:5). At his resurrection, the rich man will see the flames of the lake of fire beginning to surround him. He knows these flames will destroy him forever. Being in great mental agony, he asks for just a little water to cool his tongue, which has become dry from his mental anguish. He does not ask for buckets or oceans of water to put the fire out. He knows such a request would be denied.

3. What did Abraham then answer the rich man? Luke 16:25-26.

COMMENT: The great "gulf" between the two will be the difference between mortality and immortality. Those who will have been made immortal shall never die because they will have been born of God (Revelation 20:6). Abraham and the beggar will be on the immortal side of this gulf—the mortal rich man on the other side, facing imminent eternal death by fire!

Many of the condemned, like the rich man, will want their relatives warned (Luke 16:27-28), not realizing how much time has passed since they died and that all other people will already have

had their chance to receive salvation. The story or parable of "Lazarus and the rich man" does not prove eternal punishing by God in hell fire. Rather, Christ used this short illustration to picture to His listeners the REALITY of the resurrection from the dead of both the righteous and the wicked. He was picturing the resurrection to ETERNAL LIFE as contrasted with the ultimate fate of the wicked—the resurrection to ETERNAL DEATH!

God Is Love—and Justice!

Why do so many people have a false concept of "hell"? Because they fail to understand God's overall purpose in putting man on this earth.

God's purpose for man is to develop holy, righteous character which will make him fit to receive the precious gift of eternal life. But God created man of the dust of the ground, subject to death, so that if he failed to develop right character he could be released from his misery by death.

God has no desire to torment or to torture anyone. God is love (1 John 4:8). He created us mortal for our own good. He will condemn no one because of ignorance, and will see to it that every single one will ultimately learn the truth and have a real chance for salvation. But if God granted eternal life to those who persistently rebel and fail to develop righteous character, they would simply bring misery on themselves as well as others for all eternity!

Certainly the kindest thing God can do, for all involved, is not to allow such a rebel to continue living. So God will simply put the incorrigibly rebellious to DEATH-not mercilessly torture them forever!

God is also a God of justice. The obedient will be given the free gift of eternal life. But the disobedient must also be paid the wages they have earned. The final or second death—eternal death in the lake of fire—will be the penalty there own sins have incurred. This truth should inspire no unreasoning terror such as the pagan, satanic doctrine of eternal hell fire has caused to so many innocent people. On the other hand, the lake of fire should stand as a FEARFUL WARNING to all who know God's truth and still stubbornly refuse to obey it!

Only those who obey God—those who become and remain Christians in the true sense of the word—will inherit eternal life (John 3:16). All others who willfully live in disobedience to God will die the second death.

Those are the two alternatives God places before each of us—eternal life on the one hand, and everlasting death on the other. The idea of an ever-burning "hell" is clearly a pagan myth and superstition. It is merely a fable that has crept into professing Christianity. But the Biblical hell fire—the one Christ spoke of—will be VERY REAL! It will consume the incorrigible wicked, reducing them to mere ashes.

Let's strive to qualify for eternal life so we will not have to pay the penalty of eternal death—extinction in the lake of fire.

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle, or underline each correct answer. After you've finished, check your choices with the correct answers at the end of this test, and then rate yourself.

1. "Hell" is a subject A. nowhere mentioned in the Bible. B. not well understood by most people today. C. that was well understood by the ancient pagans. D. that was first introduced by Dante Alighieri.

2. Dante got his ideas about hell from A. Polycarp. B. the Bible. C. Plato and Virgil. D. attested personal experiences of some who had been there.

3. Which of the following do NOT believe that there is a place of never-ending divine torment and vengeance called "hell"? A. Catholics. B. Protestants. C. Mohammedans and Hindus. D. Christians who accept the literal interpretation of the Bible.

4. Most of this world’s people A. are headed for an ever-burning hell. B. have never had a chance to receive salvation. C. believe in Jesus Christ. D. will never go to "hell"—Greek hades.

5. Jesus Christ spoke of A. a hell of eternal torment and torture. B. Jewish myths of a gehenna in order to refute them. C. a place of fire that will never be quenched. D. the grave as a place of fire.

6. The English word "hell" originally meant A. simply a grave or a hole in the ground. B. a garbage dump. C. the eternal home of wicked immortal souls. D. a condition of restraint for evil spirits.

7. Which of these words is NOT translated "hell" in the Authorized Version of the Bible? A. Gehenna. B. Hades. C. Sheol. D. Abussos.

8. Those who have died are now A. simply in their graves. B. in torments. C. disembodied spirits free to roam the universe at will. D. immortal worms.

9. How can you always know the meaning of the word "hell" when you read it in your Bible? A. By remembering it always means fire. B. By deducing it from the context. C. You can’t ever be sure. D. By checking it in an exhaustive concordance of the Bible such as Strong’s or Young’s.

10. Hell fire is to be A. everlasting fire in the cavernous depths of the earth. B. the lake of fire on the earth’s surface. C. on the surface of the sun. D. on the moon.

TRUE OR FALSE 11. Jesus preached to wicked spirits in prison while He was in "hell" (hades—the grave). T F 12. Satan and his demons will be destroyed in the lake of fire along with the incorrigible wicked of humanity. T F 13. The fires that burned and destroyed the ancient city of Jerusalem were never "quenched." T F

14. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man proves there is—right now—an eternal punishing of the wicked going on. T F

15. The kindest thing God could do is to destroy forever anyone who refuses to live the way of life that is conducive to peace and happiness. T F Draw a line from each numbered phrase to the correctly related lettered phrase.

16. The wicked

A. Being tormented

B. Being tormented

17. "Wages of sin"

C. Death

D. Quenched

18. Lake of fire

E. To become ashes

F. Cannot burn up.

19. Satan

G. Symbolic only

H. Earth burning

20. Files

I "Immortal worms"

J Eternal life

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-B 5-C 9-D 13-T 17-C 19-20 correct - - - excellent 2-C 6-A 10-B 14-F 18-H 16-18 correct - - - good 3-D 7-D 11-F 15-T 19-F 13-15 correct - - - fair 4-B 8-A 12-F 16-E 20-I

Lesson 07

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 7 Will You Go To Heaven When You Die?

You've always heard that you'll go to heaven if you're "saved. "And most have assumed that their loved ones have already "gone to heaven" when they died. But what does the Bible say? Is heaven really the "reward of the saved"? WHY, if the righteous go to heaven, did the Apostle John write: "No MAN hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven"—referring to Jesus Christ Himself (John 3:13)?

If the "saved" go to heaven when they die, why did Peter say that King David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), "is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.... For David is NOT ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:29,Acts 2:34)? Yes, WHY?

What a paradox! Millions today believe the "saved" go to heaven, yet David didn't! And if the saved go to heaven when they die, what need is there for a resurrection from the dead? Why a resurrection if they have already "gone to their reward"?

Isn't it about time these puzzling yet vitally important questions were answered?

What MOST People Believe

Belief in a heaven beyond the grave is not limited to professing Christians. People around the world have always believed in some kind of after life—some type of "reward" after death. It is a "recognized article of the creed of heathens, Jews and Mohammedans.... Eternal blessedness was, in the view of the ancient pagans, reserved for those only who were distinguished for their exalted virtues, and who were accordingly admitted into the society of the gods..." (The Faiths of the World, vol. 5, p. 10).

States this same authority: "The heaven of the Hindu is absorption in Brahma and of the Buddhist, annihilation or Nirvana. The priesthood of the ancient Egyptians taught the immortality of the soul under the name of Palingenesia, or a second birth, being a return of the soul to the celestial spheres, or its reabsorption into the Supreme Being..." (p. 11). The eleventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica declares there is "a bewildering variety in the views of the future life and the world held by different peoples.... The scene of the future life may be thought of on earth, in some distant part of it, or above the earth, in the sky, sun, moon or stars, or beneath the earth. The abodes of bliss and the places of torment may be distinguished, or one last dwelling-place may be affirmed for all the dead. Sometimes the good find their abiding home with the gods; sometimes a number of heavens of varying degrees of blessedness is recognized" (vol. 9, p. 760).

Mohammedans believe in a heaven prepared for the blessed, the professors of the "true religion," followers of Mohammed. In paradise, they believe they shall enjoy perpetual light and all heavenly pleasures. Their belief includes eight heavens or different degrees of happiness.

Mohammed taught about a paradise of carnal, sensual pleasures, but at the same time he taught in the Koran that the height of happiness will consist of seeing God face to face, and that this pleasure will cause all the other pleasures of paradise to be forgotten.

Many Australian tribes have had a belief in a happy "other-world." In particular, those scattered over the southeastern region believed in a future happy life "beyond the great water" or in the sky. This "paradise" was often called "gum tree country." The path to "sky-land" was believed to be by the rays of the setting sun or by the Milky Way.

Tasmanian aborigines looked forward to a happier life after death, in which they would pursue the chase and forever enjoy the pleasures which they coveted on earth.

Ancient Teutonic peoples believed in a heavenly abode called Valhalla. To this heaven of the gods—a warrior's paradise—all brave warriors hoped to go. "It is raftered with spears, it is decked with shields, its benches are strewn with coats of mail. A wolf hangs before the western door, an eagle hovers over it.... So great was Valhalla that it possessed five hundred and forty doors. Every day the warriors, fully armed, issued from the gates to amuse themselves in combat with each other, returning to feast and drink heavenly mead from the cups presented to them by the Valkyries" (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. II, p. 709).

Some Eskimos of Greenland still believe in two regions of paradise: The first in the cold sky or "over-world," with hills and valleys and a heaven; the other, an underground domain, a blissful place with sunshine and perpetual summer.

Clearly, the idea of going to heaven when one dies is not the sole property of professing Christians. Pagans since time immemorial have had similar notions! The Egyptian "Heaven"

History tells us that many of the ideas of professing Christianity concerning heaven came directly from ancient Egyptians.

Writes Adolph Erman in The Ancient Egyptians (translated by Aylaward M. Blackman): "The Pyramid Texts are mainly concerned with the desire of the august dead to avoid leading a gloomy existence in the underworld—the fate of ordinary mortals—and to dwell in the sky like the gods. There he might voyage with the sun-god in his ship, or dwell in the Fields of the Blessed, the Field of Food-Offerings, or the Fields of Iaru [or Alu]. He might himself become a god, and the fancy of the poets strives to depict the king in this new role. No longer is he a man whom the gods graciously receive into heaven but a conqueror who seizes heaven from them" (p. 2). The Egyptians believed that before the souls of the dead could reach the Egyptian "heaven"—the Fields of Iaru—and appear in the presence of Osiris, they must traverse a vast under-world region called the Tuat which was inhabited by gods, devils, fiends, demons, good and bad spirits and the souls of the wicked, besides snakes, monsters and serpents. The Egyptian sacred book, The Book of the Dead, prescribed spells, incantations, prayers, charms and amulets to help the dead man overcome the dangers of the Tuat and to reach Sekhet Aaru and Sekhet Hetep—other names for the Egyptian heaven—to take his place among the subjects of Osiris in the "Land of Everlasting Life" (E. A. Wallis Budge, The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians, pp. 40-41). The arriving dead, the Egyptians thought, were ushered into a Hall of Judgment presided over by Osiris. "When the verdict is favorable and he has been cleared of any impurity, his heart is restored, and after several other ordeals, he is ushered into the bright Elysian Fields (the Fields of

Alu) beyond the water.... Henceforth, he enjoys the perennial life of the blessed under the shadow of the tree of life, or the sycamore of Nut, the goddess of the sky, a true Osiris" (Kohler, Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religion, p. 22). When the verdict was unfavorable, the poor sinner experienced the "second death." His dismemberment followed, and the fiercest tortures awaited him, including burning by hot coals, plunging into deep waters, or cutting the body into pieces by sharp swords.

Says Kohler, "We have here the very origin of the Inferno and Paradiso" (p. 23, emphasis ours).

What the Early Church Taught But astounding as it may seem, neither Jesus nor His apostles taught that the righteous go to heaven! Notice the admission of a secular encyclopedia:

"The dominant view in the early church seems to have been that until the return of the Lord upon the clouds of heaven to raise the dead, those who had died were asleep, and that they would be suddenly awakened to be given their new bodies, after which they would reign with Him on earth for a thousand years..." (The New International Encyclopedia, art. "Heaven," vol. 9, pp. 700-701). The early Church clearly did not teach the concept of "going to heaven." Such teachings did not become popular until long after the death of the apostles! Notice, however, what gradually happened: "But, largely under the influence of Greek thought, other conceptions [gradually] prevailed. The fate of the patriarchs, prophets, and pious men of the old dispensation naturally occupied much attention and led to the idea that they [their "immortal souls"] were detained in a preparatory abode which the fathers called limbus patrum, awaiting the advent of the Redeemer. The general belief of Christians has been that since the resurrection of Christ the just who are free from sin are admitted immediately after death into heaven, where their chief joy consists in the unclouded vision of God" (ibid.).

History shows that the teachings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen and others gradually turned most professing Christians from the belief of a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. The floodgates were opened. Hellenistic philosophy, which had borrowed heavily from ancient Egyptian mythology, began to replace the teachings of the Bible as the source of doctrine. Prevailing concepts such as the immortality of the soul, an ever burning hell, purgatory and heaven all came directly out of ancient mythology! The popular church, in order to become universal, adopted and taught these prevailing pagan philosophies rather than the plain teachings of the Bible!

Today, the idea of heaven being the "reward of the saved" is nearly universal among Protestant churches. The vast majority of professing Christians look forward to going to a "heaven" where the righteous sit on clouds, pluck harps, shuffle through harp music, and look up into the face of the Master for ALL ETERNITY! The hit song of the 50s about that "lucky ole sun" that has "nuthin to do, but roll around heaven all day" aptly depicts the nebulous belief of millions of what "heaven" is like. But as we shall soon see, this common belief did NOT come from the teachings of Christ or the apostles!

What is the plain truth about heaven? What DOES your Bible teach about the "reward of the saved"?

LESSON 7 The Promised Land

There is a statement in the book of Galatians which actually summarizes the very PURPOSE and PLAN of God for mankind. The Christian’s hope of an eternal "reward" depends altogether on the subject covered in that greatly misunderstood passage!

While addressing Gentile-born converts in Galatia, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "Now to ABRAHAM and his seed were the PROMISES made.... And if YE be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham seed, and heirs according to the PROMISE" (Galatians 3:16,Galatians 3:29). The Christian is not yet a possessor of his reward—he is now only an "heir." What Christians shall inherit, if "saved"—whatever shall be the "reward of the saved"—wherever they shall spend eternity—is a definite, specific PROMISE of God. And that promise was made to Abraham, called, in this same book of Galatians written for Gentile converts, the "father" of the faithful (Galatians 3:7).

If one is converted, regardless of race or color or sex; IF one is "Christ’s"—a Christian—then he becomes one of Abraham’s children, and an "heir" of the PROMISE made to Abraham. What he is to inherit, then, is whatever was promised to Abraham! Let’s see if it was heaven.

1. Precisely what did God promise Abraham? Genesis 12:2-3,Genesis 12:6-7.

COMMENT: "Seed" means offspring. So the promise to Abraham and his offspring—his descendants—was the LAND OF CANAAN!

2. Abraham went to Egypt for a short time (Genesis 12:10). When he returned to Canaan, did God reiterate His promise to Abraham and his offspring? Genesis 13:14-15.What are the boundaries of this land? Genesis 15:18.

COMMENT: The land of Canaan, much of which is occupied by the Jews today, was promised to Abraham and his descendants. That’s why it’s called "the promised land"! Notice that it is a region on this earth, not up in heaven somewhere!

3. How long did God promise Abraham that he and his seed would possess the land? Genesis 13:15.

COMMENT: Since the inheritance is to be an ETERNAL inheritance, it of necessity involves and includes EVERLASTING LIFE! More about this later.

4. Was this promise expanded until it ultimately included inheritance of the WHOLE EARTH? Romans 4:13.

COMMENT: Not one word about heaven! Through Abraham, all true Christians are promised the earth!

5. Were the same promises God made to Abraham also made to his son, Isaac? Genesis 26:1-5.

6. And were the same promises then given to Jacob, Isaac’s son? Genesis 35:9-12.And to Jacob’s children—the Israelites? Romans 9:4.

COMMENT: Jacob, whose name was changed to "Israel," had twelve sons. Each son gave rise to one of the twelve tribes of Israel, known collectively as the "children of Israel," or Israelites.

Obedience BEFORE Inheritance 1. In making this promise to Abraham, God conditioned it on obedience. What did God tell Abraham to do? Genesis 12:1.

2. Did Abraham resist, quibble and argue with God about leaving his homeland? Or did he just DO what he was commanded? Genesis 12:4;Hebrews 11:8.Into what land did God lead Abraham? Genesis 12:5.

COMMENT: God called Abram (as his name was then) out of Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his birth. That land was under the sway of the political system that began at Babel, symbolic of the spiritual "Babylon" in which we live today! Today, God calls us out of this present world—this modern Babylon! (Revelation 18:1-4.)

Abraham did obey! First, he left his native land, his friends and relatives, his old ways of life—he forsook ALL and followed where God led. But God did not stop here in testing Abraham’s willingness to obey Him.

Let’s notice:

3. How did God further test Abraham? Genesis 22:1-2.

COMMENT: The proper translation of the word "tempt," as used here, is "try." God tempts no man (James 1:13). When the King James translation of the Bible was made, the word "tempt" meant to "try," or to "test." That is why the translators used the word "tempt" in Genesis 22:1.

4. Did Abraham, in facing this test, stop to reason it out, make excuse, or rebel? Or did he faithfully OBEY God—even rising early in the morning to obey His command? Genesis 22:3.

5. Did God allow Abraham to kill his only son? Genesis 22:10-12.

COMMENT: God did not really want Isaac’s life—He merely wanted Abraham’s WILLINGNESS to obey Him in faith! Because Abraham was faithfully obedient to God, the Bible refers to him as the "father" of all who live by faith (Romans 4:11;Galatians 3:7).

6. After Abraham obeyed—had been put to the test and found faithful—were there any other conditions to God’s original promise? Genesis 22:15-18.Note the words, "because thou HAST DONE this thing," in Genesis 22:16; and the words, "because thou hast OBEYED MY VOICE," in Genesis 22:18.

COMMENT: The promise was now UNCONDITIONAL! Abraham had performed HIS part of the covenant, or agreement.

7. What other scripture shows us that this promise is ABSOLUTELY SURE? Genesis 26:5.

All Can Become "Heirs" to the Promise!

Let’s notice how people of all nations can become "heirs" to the same promises made to righteous Abraham and his descendants.

1. Did God promise Abraham that ALL nations of the earth would be blessed through his "seed"? Genesis 12:3;Genesis 22:18.Who is this "seed"? Galatians 3:8,Galatians 3:16.

COMMENT: The word "seed in Genesis 22:18 refers specifically to One Seed—Christ—rather than to Abraham's multiple "seed" or offspring mentioned in Genesis 13:16;Genesis 17:8.

2. Does Luke 3:23,Luke 3:34 prove that Jesus was a direct descendant—a "seed"— of Abraham? Did He clearly spring from the tribe of Judah, one of the sons of Jacob or Israel? Luke 3:33-34. Also notice John 4:22 and Hebrews 7:14.

COMMENT: Luke records Jesus' genealogy through His mother Mary. Joseph, mentioned in Luke 3:23,was actually the son-in-law of Heli, the father of Mary. And so Luke shows that Mary was directly descended from Abraham (Luke 3:34).

3. How does one who is not a direct descendant of Abraham by birth become an "heir" to the promises made to him? Galatians 3:28-29.

COMMENT: All people who have not descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob (Israel) are called "Gentiles" in the Bible. And so Paul went on to show these Gentile-born Galatians that the only way they could become heirs to the promise made to Abraham was by becoming children ("seed") of Abraham by spiritual adoption THROUGH CHRIST!

4. What did Paul say the Ephesian Gentile Christians were before their conversion? Ephesians 2:11-12.

COMMENT: As Gentiles, they had been "strangers from the covenants of promise, having NO HOPE, and without God in the world."

5. But through Christ and His sacrifice, were they brought near to the promise? Ephesians 2:13.And were they strangers and foreigners anymore? Verse 19. Were they then a part of the spiritual household of God? Same verse.

COMMENT: And so today people from EVERY nation may become "heirs" of the promises God made to Abraham by becoming his "seed" through Christ!

We read in Galatians 3:7,"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." If you are a converted Christian, regardless of race, Abraham is your "father" in the faith, and you will inherit whatever God promised to him. Isn't that clear? And so ALL true Christians are heirs with Abraham to inherit (1) ETERNAL LIFE and (2) ETERNAL INHERITANCE OF THE ENTIRE EARTH. "Heaven" was NOT included in the promises God made to Abraham! But when will Abraham and his "children" receive their inheritance? When will they receive the promises? Has Abraham already "gone to his reward"—has he already inherited the promises?

Promises YET to Be Fulfilled 1. Has Abraham yet received the inheritance God promised to him? Acts 7:2-5.Notice especially Acts 7:5.

COMMENT: These inspired words of Stephen plainly state that Abraham never received the promised inheritance—even though God's promise was made UNCONDITIONAL because of his obedience.

2. Were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob merely sojourners—that is, temporary inhabiters, visitors—in the land God had promised to them? Hebrews 11:8-10.Had they, at the time the book of Hebrews was written, received the promises? Hebrews 11:13, Hebrews 11:39-40. Was Abraham still dead

during the time of Christ and the apostles? John 8:52-53.

COMMENT: Do you grasp what these inspired scriptures of God are saying? They say in plain language that all these men died, in faith, NOT HAVING RECEIVED THE Promises! The very fathers to whom the promises were made did not "go to their reward at death"! Nor had they "gone to their reward" YEARS after the resurrection and ascension of Christ to heaven!

3. What about David, an heir of Abraham and one of God's prophets during Old Testament times? Did he inherit the promises, or is he still dead in his grave? Acts 2:29.

COMMENT: We read in the New Testament that Abraham and all the patriarchs have NOT received the promised inheritance, even to this day! They, and all Christians who become Abraham's children through Christ, are now only HEIRS to the promises. An "heir" is one who has not yet come into his inheritance. And so they have not yet become "inheritors"! The BIG question that still remains, then, is: When will they receive the promised inheritance? To Inherit the "Kingdom of God" In order to understand when the promises will be inherited, let's study more fully what Abraham and his heirs are to inherit.

1. What did Jesus Christ "confirm" during His ministry on earth? Romans 15:8.And what message did he proclaim? Mark 1:14;Matthew 9:35.

COMMENT: In confirming the promises of eternal inheritance God made to the "fathers" (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) Christ always preached the Gospel--the GOOD NEWS—of the KINGDOM OF GOD which is to occupy and govern the earth—the same earth that has been promised to Abraham and his heirs for an eternal inheritance. Is there any connection? Absolutely! Notice further:

2. Will all the righteous men of old be "in" the Kingdom of God? Luke 13:28;Matthew 8:11.

COMMENT: The promises God made to the fathers included ENTRANCE into the Kingdom of God! And so their inheritance will include (1) ETERNAL LIFE in (2) the KINGDOM OF GOD and (3) the EARTH on which that Kingdom will reign—the very SAME INHERITANCE you and I may receive through Christ!

3. What did Jesus say Christians should strive to enter? Matthew 6:33;Matthew 7:21.

COMMENT: Notice in Matthew 7:21 that it is the Kingdom "of" heaven—not in heaven! "Of" does not mean "in." It is the Kingdom of, or owned and ruled by, heaven in the same sense that "the Bank of Morgan" was not in Mr. Morgan—but was owned and ruled by him.

Matthew's Gospel always uses the term "kingdom of heaven" to express exactly the same thing that Mark, Luke and John express as "kingdom of God." It does not mean a kingdom in heaven, any more than it means a kingdom in God! But it does mean a kingdom owned and ruled by GOD whose throne and dwelling place is in heaven.

4. What did Jesus, in His "sermon on the mount," say the "meek" shall inherit? Matthew 5:5.But what did He say of the "poor in spirit"? Matthew 5:3.Is this a contradiction?

COMMENT: Of course not! The "meek" and the "poor in spirit"—in other words, humble Christians—shall inherit THE EARTH for an everlasting possession, and shall enter the "Kingdom

of heaven" which will be set up on earth! That Kingdom, as we learned in a previous lesson, is the divine, ruling government of God which Christ will establish on earth at His return. To enter into—or "inherit"—the divine Kingdom of God is a destiny of such marvelous glory that the human mind cannot fully grasp it! Men today have no conception of what is in store for the obedient. The inheritance that awaits every true Christian surpasses anything you have ever conceived in your mind! As we read in 1 Corinthians 2:9,"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God bath prepared for them that love him." The full extent of the inheritance God has promised the righteous cannot even be remotely imagined by the natural mind of man—but God does reveal it to us "by His Spirit" (verse 10). Precisely what God reveals will be covered fully in the next lesson!

5. What does Matthew 6:10 also tell us about God’s Kingdom?

COMMENT: Christians today are to pray earnestly: "THY KINGDOM COME!" Obviously, then, it has NOT come to the earth yet.

6. Where is the Christian’s inheritance being kept? 1 Peter 1:3-4;Matthew 5:12;Luke 6:23.

COMMENT: These verses do NOT say, "Great is your reward when you get to heaven." They do not tell us when or where Christians will receive their inheritance and rewards—only that they are being "reserved" for them in heaven!

7. When will the righteous inherit the Kingdom of God—receive their inheritance and rewards? Matthew 25:31-34.Clearly it is WHEN CHRIST RETURNS that Abraham and his children will become inheritors of the promises! But notice what else must happen at Christ’s coming.

Importance of the Resurrection 1. Can anyone inherit the Kingdom of God while still a mortal flesh-and-blood human being? 1 Corinthians 15:50.

COMMENT: No HUMAN can inherit the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a human kingdom—there are NO humans in it. It is a DIVINE KINGDOM—the GOD Kingdom!

2. What did Paul say must happen to our mortal bodies in order to inherit and actually become a part of that Kingdom? 1 Corinthians 15:51,1 Corinthians 15:53. When will our bodies be changed—converted from flesh to spirit? Verse 52. Does that trumpet sound at the SECOND COMING of Christ? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16.Is this when Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and others will inherit the promises? Same verses. What did Jesus call this change, while explaining it to Nicodemus? John 3:6,John 3:8. And if we are "born of the spirit," can we finally "see"--ENTER—the divine, spiritual Kingdom of God? John 3:3.

COMMENT: At the second coming of Jesus Christ all the dead in Christ will be raised with new SPIRIT bodies; and those mortal Christians still alive at His return will be instantly changed into the same kind of SPIRIT BODIES—bodies which can INHERIT the Kingdom of God. Our present flesh is corruptible, subject to death and decay. But spirit beings are ETERNALLY NEW—immortal, incorruptible, never subject to death and decay!

3. Did Jesus declare that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will—in the future—be resurrected in order to be in God’s Kingdom? Matthew 22:31-32.

COMMENT: This text is often twisted around and perverted in an attempt to prove that Abraham is not dead—that he has already gone to his promised reward WITHOUT having to be resurrected—just the diametric OPPOSITE of what Jesus used this illustration to point out.

God is the God of the living, not the dead. Jesus was speaking of their future resurrection to immortal life! For He plainly said, "As touching the RESURRECTION of the dead...."

We can now see why Abraham and his children through Christ have not, as yet, inherited the promises. They simply cannot come into this ETERNAL INHERITANCE until they receive ETERNAL LIFE! This, as Paul explained, will happen at the resurrection from the dead!

Without a resurrection, the dead would never live again! (1 Corinthians 15:16,1 Corinthians 15:18) Therefore, the resurrection of the dead is central to God’s plan. And unless Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all deceased Christians are RESURRECTED from the grave at Christ’s coming, they cannot inherit the promises!

Let’s briefly summarize a few points: The resurrection of the dead shall occur at the second coming of Christ—when He comes as the KING of kings and the LORD of lords to reign over and to rule all nations of the earth. When He comes to set up His Kingdom, then Abraham and his spiritual children in Christ shall be given immortality and will inherit the Kingdom of God—a world-ruling GOVERNMENT headed by and ruled by Christ, occupying the very land promised to Abraham—the land stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates River. And this Kingdom or government composed of IMMORTALS shall rule over all the nations of earth composed of flesh and blood mortals!

How different the plain truth of God’s Word is from the ancient religious fables and myths which the world embraces today!

How Christ Made Eternal Inheritance Possible

Jesus Christ came to "confirm" the promises made to the fathers (Romans 15:8). We need to understand what this means. Let’s notice how Christ made it possible for all mankind to inherit these glorious promises.

1. What is sin? 1 John 3:4.Will anyone who sins—transgresses God’s law- inherit the Kingdom of God? Ephesians 5:5;1 Corinthians 6:9-10.What is the penalty— "the wages"— of sin? Romans 6:23.Have all people sinned? Romans 3:23.

COMMENT: God is Creator of the entire universe. He is also the great Lawgiver. Whoever is not obedient to Him commits sin. Sin causes sorrow, suffering, anguish and DEATH! And so the Bible shows that anyone who disobeys God is worthy of death—ETERNAL DEATH! Since all have sinned, all have come under the same penalty. If each one of us were to pay the penalty of our own sins, none could receive eternal life—none could inherit the promises made to the fathers.

2. But did Jesus Christ voluntarily give His SINLESS LIFE as a sacrifice FOR US so we wouldn’t have to pay the penalty of our sins, and thus be deprived of eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God? John 10:17-18;1 Timothy 2:5-6;Romans 5:8-10.

COMMENT: God, the Father, created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9;John 1:1-3). Jesus was GOD incarnate—God made flesh (John 1:14). Therefore, as God and our Maker, Jesus' physical life was of GREATER VALUE than the sum total of all human lives ever born! So by dying Jesus was able to pay the penalty of death for ALL the sins of ALL mankind! Christ "confirmed" the promises God made to Abraham by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and then by dying for our sins. His death makes it possible for us to receive eternal life! (John 3:16.)

3. But what conditions must we fulfill before Christ's sacrifice can be applied to pay the penalty our past sins have incurred? Acts 2:38.What must we become? Galatians 3:29,first five words; Romans 8:9..

COMMENT: Whether a direct descendant of Abraham or a Gentile, ALL MUST become "Christ's"—a "Christian"—in order to become eligible to receive eternal inheritance!

4. Has Jesus become the "Captain," or fore-runner—the leader—of our salvation through His suffering, death and subsequent resurrection to glory? Hebrews 2:9-10.Of what has Jesus been appointed "heir" by the Father? Hebrews 1:1-2.And will we, if we become "Christ's"—Christians—and overcome, INHERIT ALL THINGS with Him as co-heirs? Romans 8:16-17;Revelation 21:6-7.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, at His resurrection, inherited all the promises made to Abraham! And by living a sinless life He made it possible for all who accept His sacrifice to become CO-HEIRS of the same promises with Him!

5. Did Christ leave a will, or last testament? Hebrews 9:15.(A "testament" is a will.) What kind of inheritance will the heirs of this will, or "testament," receive? Same verse. When a person makes a will, must he die before it comes into force? Hebrews 9:16-17.

COMMENT: Christ left a will—a "testament." This is why the last fourth of your Bible is called the "New Testament." It teaches us what we must do to become co-heirs with Him of the promise of eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God. But a testament, or will, is of no effect unless the one making it dies. So Christ died that we may inherit the promises through Him. But He lives today at the Father's right hand, ready to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25), to help us, to give us strength so we can all overcome sin and inherit the glorious promises of God! Has Anyone Gone to Heaven?

There is absolutely NO scripture in all the Bible that promises HEAVEN as the "reward of the saved." NO scripture speaks of the saints—true Christians—going to heaven when they die! And yet most people seem to be ignorant of the plain teaching of the Word of God and have carelessly taken for granted, without question, the false idea of "going to heaven"! Let's notice a few more scriptures which have been either overlooked or carelessly interpreted by those who want to believe in this false doctrine.

1. What did Jesus tell His disciples, as recorded in John 13:33,John 13:36?

COMMENT: Some have assumed that Christ taught His disciples they would follow Him into heaven "afterwards." All the plain scriptures we have studied thus far in this lesson show that this clearly is NOT what Christ was saying! Peter later also died and still lies unconscious in his grave. He will rise later—at Christ's return—in the resurrection with the rest of the saints, and become an immortal member of the Kingdom of God!

2. Does the Bible give us a clear idea of where the resurrected saints will be and what they will be doing after Christ returns? Revelation 5:10.What did Christ say He is preparing for them? John 14:2-3.

COMMENT: "Mansions" is an improper translation. The correct rendering is "abodes" or "dwelling places." In this case the abodes refer to rooms in the "Father's house" or God's Temple. In Old Testament times the rooms in the temple were occupied by God's priests. These rooms represent positions of authority—those positions which the saints will be given in God's ruling Kingdom at Christ's return!

These positions will not be in heaven. Christ plainly said He was going to heaven to "prepare" a position of authority for each Christian. But it is only when He comes to earth again that these positions will be awarded. When Jesus returns to this earth, as King of kings, He will tell the saints: "Come, ye blessed... inherit the Kingdom, PREPARED FOR YOU" (Matthew 25:34). And the Scriptures declare that they will rule all nations here on earth, having POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY in God s Kingdom!

3. Does the Bible dogmatically state that NO ONE, except Jesus Himself, has ever ascended up into heaven? John 3:13.Could anything be clearer?

4. But what about the "thief on the cross"? Didn't he go to heaven with Jesus that very day? Luke 23:43.The very plain and simple answer is No! Let's understand why.

COMMENT: In the first place, Christ Himself did not go to heaven that day. Instead he was placed in the tomb—in "hell"—where He remained dead for the next three whole days and nights.

Second, the word "paradise" does not mean heaven at all. The word actually describes the earth when God will dwell on it. "Paradise" simply means a "garden, pleasureground; grove, park"—"a grand enclosure or preserve...shady and wellwatered...enclosed by walls." That is the definition you will find in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. And third, in many versions of the Bible, this verse is mispunctuated. There were no commas in the Greek when the New Testament was written. So when the translators supplied the commas in the English, they were placed where the translators thought they should be. Actually, Christ did not say, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," but rather, "I say unto thee today, shalt thou [or thou shalt] be with me in paradise." By using the word "today," Jesus was stressing the time of His promise- not the time He would be in paradise. Jesus discerned the man's repentant attitude and was able to tell him that he would eventually live again, with Christ, in a beautiful world. That "paradise," however, has not yet come to this earth, and the repentant malefactor is still dead!

5. What will those who "wait upon the Lord" inherit? Psalms 37:9.What shall those "blessed of God" inherit? Psalms 37:22. What shall the "righteous" inherit, and how long shall they dwell there? Psalms 37:29. And what does God promise to those who "keep His way"? Psalms 37:34.

COMMENT: Is there anything wrong with having the earth as an eternal inheritance? Would you "settle for" earth? The earth today would be an extremely wonderful place in which to live were it not for sin—rebellion against God and His eternal spiritual laws that bring peace, happiness and joy! Happiness and joy are not a matter of geographical location. Happiness is a state of mind—a spiritual condition!

There will be NO SIN in the spiritual Kingdom of God. No liars, no murderers, no thieves or robbers. Think of it—there'll be no devil to deceive anyone, no locks on doors, no jails, no hospitals, no poor houses! No strife, no war—no sickness or disease—no poverty, no hunger, no want!

What a wonderful inheritance! When we put all the Scriptures together, it becomes crystal clear that the reward of the saints is not strumming on harps up in heaven for all eternity. It is infinitely more glorious and exciting than that!

Heaven on Earth! In a previous lesson we studied what the Millennial rule of Christ on the earth will be like. We found that the whole world will then become a glorious UTOPIAN PARADISE—resplendent as the Garden of Eden! But what will the earth be like when the Millennium is over—when all the righteous will have been given immortality and eternal life, and all the wicked will have been burned to ashes?

1. Will there be a NEW earth and NEW heavens after the present earth's surface is purified? 2 Peter 3:7-13;Revelation 21:1.

2. Who will dwell on the new earth? Revelation 21:24-27.Will these "nations" be the resurrected, immortal sons of God—the saved? Revelation 21:24. Are their names written in the book of life? Revelation 21:27.

3. What will be the capital city of the new earth? Revelation 21:2,Revelation 21:10-14. How big will this city be? Revelation 21:15-17. Will it be a sparkling, glorious city with streets of real gold? Revelation 21:18-21. Where will this city come from? Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:10.

COMMENT: How clear, therefore, that although Christians do not go to heaven when they die or when they are resurrected, the "HEAVENLY JERUSALEM" IS COMING TO EARTH!

4. Will God the Father, at that time, come and dwell on the earth in person and make the new Jerusalem the location of His very THRONE? Revelation 21:3,Revelation 21:22-23;Revelation 22:3.Will those who enter this city be able to look upon God's face? Revelation 22:3-4.

COMMENT: The new Jerusalem—with streets of gold—will descend to this earth and will become God's headquarters for all eternity! The EARTH is destined to become the center of all activity in the universe!

Understanding the great future plans God has made for the earth, and seeing that the Father Himself will eventually move His headquarters to this earth, why should anyone desire to "go to heaven"? To be with God? Why, God will be here on earth!

After studying the Bible carefully, as we have with this lesson, the inescapable truth is that heaven is NOT the "reward of the saved"—that Christians do NOT go to heaven when they die, or when resurrected. Rather, heaven is coming to this earth. The earth will become the very headquarters from which God the Father will rule all His creation! Will you dwell on that new earth? Will you be a part of that glorious world? When Jesus Christ returns, He will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you..." (Matthew 25:34). Will you be among those who will inherit the Kingdom of God, along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? May God help you to understand—and qualify to have a part in that glorious kingdom!

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you've finished, check your choices with the correct answers listed at the end of the test, and then rate yourself.

1. Ancient pagan religions taught A. that no one would ever go to a heavenly abode. B. many concepts about a "heaven" similar to those of modern religions. C. that "heaven" was a myth D. absolutely nothing about a heavenly place of rest after death

2. Early Christians believed A. in going to heaven immediately at death B. in going to heaven after Christ returns C. that they would rule on the earth after being resurrected from the dead. D. that the Millennium will be spent in heaven

3. Abraham is vitally important to Christians A. because he was a perfect man. B. only because he was willing to sacrifice his son. C. not because he became the "father" of the faithful. D. because God made him a promise to which Christians are "heirs"

4. What was promised to Abraham? A. A few descendants. B. Heaven. C. Only a relatively small piece of semi-desert land. D. the whole earth as an eternal inheritance

5. What did Abraham have to manifest before God's promise was made to him? A. Obedience to God. B. Only faith in God. C. Belief in going to heaven. D. Willingness to perform countless rituals

6. Ancient King David A. went to heaven when he died. B. will ascend to heaven when resurrected C. is still dead and buried. D. may never be resurrected

7. Jesus Christ came A. to show, by example, that all resurrected Christians will go to heaven. B. to "confirm" the promises made to the fathers. C. to be obedient to God in our stead. D. to show us the way to heaven.

8. Christians will inherit the promises A. when they die B. when they accept Christ as Savior C. at the resurrection. D. after the Millennium.

9. The Bible says A. Christians will go to heaven to live in the "mansions" Christ is preparing for them. B. no man, except Jesus Christ Himself, has. ascended into the heaven of God's throne. C. all the righteous men of old have ascended to heaven. D. Christ is coming to take the resurrected saints to heaven with Him.

10. The earth would be a very desirable place to live in eternally A. if sin and the results of sin were B.—but heaven is really more desirable! C. if everyone could just do as he pleased. D. only for those who are so "meek" that they are willing to settle for earth.

True or False

11. Abraham inherited the promises when he died T F 12. Eternal inheritance for Abraham—and all his "seed"—of necessity involves and includes everlasting life! T F

13. Unfortunately God did not make provision for Gentiles to become "heirs" to the promises made to Abraham. T F 14. Christ died to make it possible for everyone to inherit the Kingdom of God. T F

15. After the earth is purified by fire, God the Father will transfer His throne to earth, making it the administrative center of the entire universe. T F Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand

column to the correctly related phrase in the right-hand column.

16. Abraham

A. Heaven

B. Reserved in heaven

17. Christians today

C. Heirs of the promises

D. Already inheritors

18. The "meek"

E. Inherit heaven

F. Obeyed God

19. Christian’s inheritance

G. Positions or offices

H. Strumming harps

20. "Many mansions"

I. "Inherit the earth

J. Went to heaven.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-B 5-A 9-B 13-F 17-C 19-20 correct excellent 2-C 6-C 10-A 14-T 18-I 16-18 correct good 3-D 7-B 11-F 15-T 19-B 13-15 correct fair 4-D 8-C 12-T 16-F 20-G

Lesson 08

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 8 What it Means to be Born Again

Many professing Christians sincerely believe they have been "BORN AGAIN"—but do not understand the REAL MEANING of the new birth. The truth about being "born again" is not only surprising—it is startling—the MOST AWESOME REVELATION of your Bible! NICODEMUS was a high-ranking Pharisee—one of the rulers of the Jews. He knew Jesus was a miracle-working prophet sent by God, and was deeply interested in His teachings. But because Nicodemus did not want to be seen speaking with this man the other Pharisees called a "heretic" and a "deceiver of the people," he came to Jesus secretly at night.

Jesus told Nicodemus a profound truth—something that completely mystified the man.

"You Must Be Born Again!"

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," said Jesus (John 3:3).

Nicodemus was totally perplexed. He asked Jesus: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?" (John 3:4)

Jesus told him: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). But Nicodemus simply did not comprehend what Jesus was talking about (John 3:9-12). How like so many people today! They, too, are baffled by these simple words of Christ.

Most professing Christians think they were "BORN AGAIN" when they "accepted Christ" and were "baptized." From that time, supposedly, they received the Holy Spirit and have been living a NEW LIFE in Christ.

True, a real Christian has received the Spirit of God, and is indeed living a NEW LIFE in Christ (Ephesians 4:22-24). But is this what it means to be "born again"? The new birth described in the Bible is FAR MORE than most professing Christians have assumed. When Jesus spoke of being "born again," He did not mean what most people think.

Two Literal Births

Nicodemus was familiar only with the process of physical birth. Therefore he understood when Jesus said to him, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" But then Jesus explained we must be born again—not again of the flesh—not again entering our mother’s womb, as Nicodemus thought He meant. He explained that we must be born of the spirit—born of God! God must be our Father this time! As we were born of the flesh through fleshly human parents, even so we must be born of the Spirit of our spiritual heavenly Father.

Here are two different kinds of birth—one physical, the other spiritual. When you were born of your fleshly parents you were composed of flesh. But "that which is born of the spirit is SPIRIT" (John

3:6)--no longer composed of flesh, but of spirit!

There will be no blood in the body of one "born of the Spirit." He will not have to breathe air to exist. He will be literally COMPOSED OF SPIRIT, declared Jesus.

That’s the plain teaching of your Bible! The new birth is not an emotional experience, but a literal birth! So Nicodemus would not mistake the true meaning of being born of the Spirit, Jesus explained to him: "The wind bloweth where it listeth [where it wills], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (verse 8).

Notice that carefully. When you are "born again," born of the Spirit of God, you will be invisible to mortal eyes like the wind (unless you choose to manifest yourself). The effects of the wind may be easily discernible, but the wind itself cannot be seen.

Clearly, Jesus compared the spiritual birth to the physical birth. The latter is a type of the former. Human parents pass on a physical nature at birth to their children; so when we are born of our heavenly Father, we will possess His Spiritual nature in its fullness!

Man the "Clay Model"

God formed the first man, Adam, not out of spirit, but "of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7). God said to Adam: "DUST thou art" (Genesis 3:19). Not immortal spirit—just plain old earth! Man is mortal, physical, not yet immortal or spiritual.

Adam was a perfect physical specimen. What God created was a physical, fleshly man—a mortal flesh and blood human being. He was the perfect "clay model" which God intends to mold and reshape spiritually into a perfect SPIRITUAL Son of God!

Adam, in other words, was not created complete. He was created to need a second "birth"—a SPIRITUAL birth! But how? When? Why? All these vital questions will be answered in this tremendously important lesson. No SUBJECT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOUR LIFE! Unless YOU become "born again," you cannot enter the Kingdom of God! So be sure to open your Bible to every scripture reference cited in answer to the questions asked, and PROVE to yourself just what it means to be "born again."

LESSON 8 Who—What—Is "God"? To fully understand what it really means to be "born again," it is necessary to comprehend some very basic revelations concerning what God Himself is—and the very PURPOSE for your existence.

Turn to the very beginning of the Bible. The first words are: "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The original Hebrew word for "God," here and throughout the account of creation, is Elohim, which actually means more than one. It is the plural form of Hebrew Eloah, which in English means "Mighty One." So Elohim means "Mighty Ones"— more than just one person.

Elohim is a uniplural or collective noun, such as "church," or "family," or "kingdom." In other words, Elohim stands for a SINGLE CLASS composed of TWO or MORE individuals. Elohim, then, is the "God KINGDOM" or "God FAMILY." (In actual usage the word was also applied to any single

member of the God Family or, by analogy, even to a heathen idol.) But who are the individuals presently composing "Elohim"? Let’s notice what the Bible reveals:

1. Who was with "God" when God created the universe? John 1:1.Is the "Word" also God? John 1:1-2. Was it the Word who actually created all things? John 1:3. What did the Word later become? John 1:14.

2. By whom was all the material universe created—including this earth and mankind? Ephesians 3:9;Colossians 1:16-17.Who, then, is the "Word" of John 1:1?And who is the other divine member of the God Kingdom? 1 Corinthians 8:6.

COMMENT: John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 are two accounts of the same event— the original creation of the universe. They both reveal that these two Supreme Beings of the God Family created all things. The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John 1:1 is Logos. It can also mean spokesman, or one who speaks. It was actually the Logos, the "Spokesman"—the "Word" of the God Family—who said, "Let us make man in OUR image" (Genesis 1:26), thus executing His awesome office as the executive of the God Kingdom. And so everything was created and made by the divine being who later became the human Jesus Christ! The "LORD" of the Old Testament Do you know which one of the two members of the God Kingdom took part in the affairs of this world in Old Testament times? Was it the "Father"? Could it possibly have been Christ? Very few have understood this important truth. But the Bible makes it plain.

1. Has any human being ever seen the Father? John 1:18.What did Christ say regarding the Father? John 5:37.

2. But did people ever look upon the God of the Old Testament? Genesis 17:1;Genesis 18:1,Genesis 18:22;Genesis 32:30;Exodus 24:9-11;Exodus 33:18,Exodus 33:20-23. (Notice in Exodus 33:18 that Moses had specifically requested to see the LORD in all His "glory," but could not view Him directly in His glorified state lest he DIE from seeing His brilliance!) COMMENT: Clearly, then, the God of the Old Testament could not have been the "Father."

3. Who was called the "Rock" in Old Testament times? 2 Samuel 22:2-3.Did David call the LORD his "Rock" and his "God"? Psalms 18:1-2.

COMMENT: The King James Version of the Bible and some other translations use the word "LORD," usually in capital letters, to translate the Hebrew word YHWH. Most scholars believe YHWH to be some form of the verb "to be" or "to exist." Hence YHWH signifies "the self-existent One," One who "lives"—from eternity, and to eternity. Revelation 1:8 clarifies the meaning of this name, speaking of Christ, "the beginning and the ending ...which is, and which was, and which is to come...." Consequently both Moffatt’s "The Eternal" and Fenton’s "Ever-Living" are excellent translations. In ancient Hebrew, the vowels were not written. They were supplied by the reader. Since the ancient Jews considered the name YHWH too holy to pronounce, they read instead Adonai or "Lord," or occasionally Elohim. When the Masoretes—Jewish textual scholars—wrote down the vowel points (about 600-800 AD) to preserve the proper pronunciation, they wrote the vowel points of Adonai or Elohim with each occurrence of YHWH. From this combination later came the hybrid form "Jehovah." Thus the precise pronunciation of YHWH is not definitely known today, nor is it necessary for us to know it today.

4. According to 1 Corinthians 10:4,who was (and still is) the "Rock"?

COMMENT: Thus the Bible identifies the "Rock" as Christ! How surprising to those who have assumed that the God of the Old Testament was the one the New Testament calls "the Father"! And so the "LORD" who spoke and was seen of men was always the one who became Jesus Christ. For no mortal man has ever seen or heard the Father! (John 1:18;John 5:37.) 5. Was it also the Word—the One who became Christ—who spoke the Ten Commandments? Exodus 20:1-2.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word for "Lord" in Exodus 20:1-26 is YHWH. So here again it was the Logos, the "Spokesman"—who later became Christ—who actually spoke the Ten Commandments! But what difference does this revelation make? It makes all the difference.

Understanding the true identity of the God of the Old Testament is vital to becoming reborn with the spiritual nature of God. For the God of the Old Testament, commonly assumed to have been harsh and stern, was really our SAVIOR—loving, kind, merciful and just (Exodus 34:5-7). The POWER of God

Most of professing Christianity today also assumes that God is a "trinity" composed of God the Father, God the Son and God the "Holy Spirit." Could this be true? Let’s learn what the Bible tells us about the Spirit of God.

1. Is God’s Spirit the POWER by which He creates? Jeremiah 32:17;Genesis 1:1-3;Psalms 104:30.

COMMENT: It was by the Spirit of God that the Eternal (YHWH)--the Logos (Christ)--created the entire vast universe. Invisible spirit energy was literally transformed into the material creation we see about us (Hebrews 11:3). And by His Spirit, God reformed the surface of the earth (Psalms 104:30). No wonder the Bible calls it the "power" of God!

2. How did the Eternal God utilize His Spirit of power to bring His various creations into being? Psalms 148:1-5.Notice the word "commanded" in Psalms 148:5. Also read Psalms 33:8-9 and Genesis 1:2-3.

COMMENT: God, the ultimate source of all power, willed that spirit energy emanating from Himself be TRANSFORMED into physical energy and matter. Christ—the Logos, or "Word" (John 1:1)--"spake and it was done." He is the One who said, "Let there be light." And the Spirit of God, moving over the face of the waters performed the command, and "there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

3. Does God also use His Spirit of power to sustain, preserve and rule His vast creation? Nehemiah 9:6;Hebrews 1:2-3;Psalms 66:7.

COMMENT: God sits at the controls of the entire universe—He rules and sustains everything by the POWER of His Spirit!

4. Does God’s Spirit fill the entire universe? Psalms 139:7-10;Jeremiah 23:24.But do the Father and Christ have definite form and shape? Genesis 1:26;John 14:9.

COMMENT: God’s Spirit is not a "third person’ in the God Family. It is His divine POWER that emanates from Him and permeates the universe!

5. But what about 1 John 5:7 which many suppose proves God is composed of three persons?

COMMENT: This verse is left out of most modern translations of the Bible—for a very good reason! It is spurious—afraid! Most any Bible commentary reveals that this verse is not found in any old Greek manuscript and was not found even in the Latin Vulgate until as late as the eighth century. Admits Adam Clarke: It is lacking in "all the ancient versions but the Vulgate; and even of this version many of the most ancient and correct MSS. [Manuscripts] have it not."

Those who believe in a "trinity" grasp at this verse to support their belief because they have NO Bible proof for their conviction! Rather, history reveals the trinity concept is a pagan invention and belief found in many ancient countries. The Egyptian trinity consisted of Isis, Osiris and Horus; the worship of the trinity traces back to the worship of Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz soon after the Flood!

6. Is the Holy Spirit referred to in the Bible simply as "it"—not a person? John 1:32;Romans 8:16,Romans 8:26; 1 Peter 1:11.

COMMENT: In Greek, as in English, the word "spirit" is neuter. It naturally requires a neuter pronoun which is rightly translated into English as "it," and is usually so translated. However, in some cases the translators have used a masculine pronoun where the original Greek uses "it." John 14:17 is such a case. The pronouns "he" and "him" should have been rendered "it." No doubt the translators erred because they themselves assumed the Holy Spirit to be a person. In John 14:26;John 16:7-8,John 16:13-14 the Holy Spirit is personified as the "Comforter" (Greek parakletos, which is grammatically masculine), hence the pronoun "he" (ekeinos) was used in the original Greek to agree with "Comforter," but should also be translated "it" in an English version. The plain fact of the whole matter, which few have ever realized, is that the commonly accepted "trinity" doctrine attempts to limit for all time the size of the Family of God. It denies the very PURPOSE for which Elohim created mankind! You will grasp this astonishing truth more fully as you continue studying. The Nature of God 1. What is the composition of God? John 4:24.But of what is man composed? 1 Corinthians 15:47.

COMMENT: One of the great differences between the God Kingdom and the human kingdom is that God is composed of invisible spirit, while man is mortal flesh and blood—made from the dust of the earth.

2. Just before He was taken to be crucified, to what state did Christ ask His Father to restore Him? John 17:5.Was Christ again to share His Father’s glory in the God Family? Same verse.

3. How do Christ’s and the Father’s powerful, glorified spirit bodies appear? Revelation 1:13-16.The "Son of Man" mentioned here is the glorified Christ!

COMMENT: TO be glorified means to have GREAT POWER and BRIGHTNESS! The power of the Father and Christ is so great that it makes their spirit bodies shine as BRIGHT AS THE SUN IN FULL STRENGTH!

4. What is another great difference between God and man—what is God’s characteristic attitude and general mental makeup? Psalms 99:9.Is there anyone as "holy" as God? 1 Samuel 2:2.Would you consider man of himself as being "holy"? Romans 3:10-18,Romans 3:23;Romans 8:7;Jeremiah 17:9.

COMMENT: The word "holy" means pure of heart or free from sin. The two Persons presently composing the God Family possess a sinless, "holy," spiritual attitude and mind. But what does all this have to do with your being "born again"?

EVERYTHING! When born again you will possess the same power, glory and holiness of God! But more about this later. A "Father Son" Relationship Have you ever wondered how the "Father-Son" relationship of the God Family developed? This is vital to know in order to understand the purpose and Plan of God, and being "born again."

1. What did Jesus say of Himself and His "Father"? John 10:30;John 17:11.Yet who is greater in authority? John 14:28.Notice also 1 Corinthians 11:3.

COMMENT: The Father and Son are one in purpose and attitude. But the Father is greater in authority since Christ—the "Word," or Logos—made all things by His authority. The Father has always been in supreme command in the Family or Kingdom of God—long before the Word became a human being.

2. Why did the Logos (Christ) become a flesh and blood human being? Hebrews 2:9,Hebrews 2:14.

COMMENT: All mankind has sinned (Romans 3:23). And "the wages of sin is [eternal] death" (Romans 6:23). The Logos became a mortal man so He could die to pay the death penalty for the sins of ALL mankind. Christ was able to do this because His human life was far more valuable than the lives of all human beings put together—He was God incarnate—GOD made flesh (John 1:14.)

3. But exactly how did the Logos become composed of flesh and blood? Matthew 1:18-21.("Ghost" in this passage, as elsewhere, is an unfortunate translation in the King James Version. It should rather be rendered "Spirit" as it is in most other translations of the Bible.) What title did the other member of the God Kingdom acquire as a result of this miraculous begettal? Matthew 18:35;John 1:14.

COMMENT: Before Christ (the Logos) was conceived in Mary, He was not the "Son of God." He was one of the two original members of the God Kingdom. He, like the one who became the "Father," had existed eternally. But He is nowhere in God’s Word referred to as a SON of God prior to His conception in Mary. His human birth was His first birth. He gave up the glory He had shared with the other divine being, who became His "Father," in order to be born into the world as a human being, live a perfect life, and then give His life to pay the penalty of all the sins of mankind. And so Jesus was begotten within His human mother Mary. But unlike all other men, He was miraculously begotten by the One who became the Father, through the agency and power of the Spirit of God (Matthew 1:20;John 1:14-- here is further proof the Spirit of God is not another person). Christ thus became the "Son" of God, and He called the other person of the God Kingdom His "Father." And so began the "Father-Son" relationship, which is a FAMILY relationship!

Now let’s begin to understand exactly what all this has to do with our being "born again."

Man Created in God’s Image

Man is not just another "animal" as evolutionists claim. God’s purpose for creating man surpasses anything ever conceived by the mind of man. Let’s turn to the first chapter of Genesis and begin to understand the most astounding revelation of your Bible!

1. After what "kind" were the animals created? Genesis 1:20-25.

COMMENT: These verses plainly say, without any interpretation, that God created fish to reproduce after their own particular kind, birds after their particular kind, and cattle after the cattle kind. Each kind may have many varieties within it, but all creatures reproduce only after their own "kind. " That is why dogs reproduce dogs, monkeys reproduce monkeys, sheep reproduce sheep, etc.

2. But what about man? After whose "image" and "likeness" was man created? Genesis 1:26-27.

COMMENT: In God’s pattern for all life, like reproduces like. And just as each created form of plant or animal reproduces after its own kind, so man reproduces man. But UNLIKE any of the animals created by God, man was created in God’s likeness.

These scriptures refute the theory that man is merely the "highest" of the animals, having "evolved" from lower mammals. They clearly state that God created man after His own "image" and "likeness"! God made man LIKE Himself—same form and shape. And He is now creating men after HIS KIND!

Only a very few have really grasped the tremendous significance of this astounding truth. But this is what salvation is all about. This revelation affirms that God is REPRODUCING HIMSELF. Our destiny is to become the literal "children" of God—Members of His own divine Family!

3. Even though man is made in the likeness of God, are both now composed of the same type of "material"? John 4:24;Genesis 2:7.

COMMENT: There is a vast difference between spirit and dust. Although man was created in the very shape and likeness of God, he was NOT created out of the same material. He was made of the dust of the earth, subject to decay. But God’s purpose is to eventually create him out of spirit! In 1 Corinthians 15:46 we read: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and AFTERWARD that which is spiritual. The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven.... And as we [speaking of converted Christians] have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:46-49).

Clearly, man is much more than any animal. Man has the potential to become divine spirit—just as GOD is spirit! Our Awesome Destiny!

Astonishing as it may seem, God is now in the process of creating His greatest creation of all—His supreme masterpiece! God’s Plan is to create perfect spiritual characters out of mortal mankind. Notice the overwhelming evidence:

1. Is God still in the process of forming and molding man as a potter works with clay? Isaiah 64:8.

COMMENT: Man’s creation in the Garden of Eden was complete only in the physical sense. Adam was created a perfect physical specimen—but not a perfect SPIRITUAL creation. He was created

of the dust—not of divine SPIRIT. He was created corruptible—not incorruptible. He was created subject to death—not immortal. But God did not intend man should remain that way!

2. Did Job realize God was forming a special creation in his life? Job 14:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice especially the latter part of Job 14:15 : "...thou wilt have a desire to the WORK of shine hands. " The "work" was Job. Job knew he was merely a piece of divine workmanship in the hands of the Master Potter.

3. Are true Christians being fashioned by God for a specific purpose? Isaiah 43:7;Ephesians 2:10.

COMMENT: The word "we" in New Testament language usually refers to Christians, as Paul intended in Ephesians 2:10. We, then—if we are Christians— are God's "workmanship." We today are being "created"—Why?--"unto good works." God, with the Holy Spirit He has put within us, is forming in us perfect spiritual character! He is creating us in His own character-image! He is creating us to be the supreme masterpiece of all His works of creation—individuals who will ultimately be capable of exercising awesome powers in the universe!

Man, the material creation, is only the first phase. Now the clay model has to be fashioned and molded by experience, and with the aid of God's Holy Spirit, into the finished spiritual masterpiece. An analogy of this process would be a caterpillar going through a metamorphosis and emerging a beautiful butterfly. Man must undergo a spiritual "metamorphosis," or CHANGE—to emerge as perfect SPIRITUALS Members in the divine GOD FAMILY!

What It Means to Be "Born Again" The Gospel Jesus brought to mankind is simply the "good news" of the Kingdom of God—and that Kingdom is DUAL. It is not only the ruling government which Christ will establish on the earth when He returns, but it is also the FAMILY of God—the God Kingdom composed of the spirit members of the God Family.

And, incredible as it may sound, Jesus taught that humans can be "born" into the FAMILY, or KINGDOM, of God.

There are only two members in the God Family or Kingdom at the present time—God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. But God is increasing His Family! And YOU can be "born" into it!

1. Does God plainly show it is His purpose to increase His divine Family by bringing many sons into it? Hebrews 2:10;Revelation 21:7.Isn't Jesus Christ actually the "firstborn" of MANY sons of God? Romans 8:29;Colossians 1:18.

COMMENT: To be "conformed to the IMAGE" of Christ means to become LIKE Him—to be glorified as He is glorified—to be of the divine FAMILY OF GOD as much as Christ now is.

2. But what must happen to flesh-and-blood Christians before they can enter God's Family? 1 Corinthians 15:49-51;John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Jesus said we must be "born again"—CHANGED INTO SPIRIT! Yes, born again—this time born of the Spirit of God as divine Sons in the Family of God.

Begotten Sons Now—Not Yet Born Again If we are true Christians, are we already—in this life—the children of God?

1. 1 John 3:1-2.Are we already inheritors of the Kingdom of God, or only heirs to it? Romans 8:14-17.

COMMENT: Notice that although we are now the "sons" and "children of God," we are only heirs—ones who shall, in the future, inherit all that God has promised. Why? Because we are now only begotten children. It is only when we are born of God that we become inheritors of God's Kingdom— divine members of the Family of God.

Before the second phase of man's creation—our spiritual creation—can begin, God the Father must first beget each of us by placing His Holy Spirit within our minds. We are then impregnated, so to speak, by the "seed" or germ of eternal life. It is the begettal of the spiritual life of God within our minds. And much as a newly begotten physical embryo begins to grow in its mother's womb, we begin to grow in SPIRITUAL CHARACTER after we are begotten by God's Spirit. This growth comes through study, prayer, and walking with God.

2. Now compare Galatians 3:26 and Ephesians 1:5 with Romans 8:14-17.Do these verses reveal the same truth—that Christians are already the children—the SONS—of God, destined to inherit eternal life?

COMMENT: Some versions of the Bible use the expression "adoption of sons" or "adoption of children." Although linguistically possible, these do not give the real meaning. The original inspired Greek expression huiothesia does simply mean "sonship." But when we receive the "spirit of sonship," as an impregnating "seed" (1 Peter 1:23), that is not an "adoption." The Holy Spirit makes us the literal begotten sons of God, for we are going to be just like our Heavenly Father when finally born into His Kingdom. And so all Spirit-begotten Christians have become the (as yet unborn) children of God the Father, in the same sense that an unborn human fetus is the child of its human parents!

3. Do we actually receive of the divine nature of God when begotten by His Holy Spirit? 2 Peter 1:3-4.What are some of the divine characteristics or "fruits" of God's nature that are made manifest in the lives of obedient Christians after they are begotten by God's Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23.

4. Is love ("charity") the greatest single attribute of God's nature that is transmitted to us by His Holy Spirit? 1 John 4:16;Romans 5:5;1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (notice especially verse 13). Is this the same love that enables us to "fulfill"—to OBEY God's Law? Romans 13:10.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit that a person may receive from God can be compared to the sperm of a human father. God's Spirit transmits His spiritual attributes to us, even as a physical sperm cell transmits a human father's attributes to his newly conceived offspring. The Holy Spirit—the germ or "seed" (1 Peter 1:23)by which we are spiritually begotten—imparts to us the nature and very life of God our heavenly Father.

If you are truly the kind of Christian described in the Bible, then you are now a begotten child or son of God. God the Father placed within your mind His Spirit, the sperm, so to speak, of eternal life. He begot you with the Holy Spirit just as the sperm from a human father impregnates the egg of the mother. Your mind can be compared to an "egg" or ovum. You were impregnated with the spiritual germ or sperm of eternal life so you could begin the process of spiritual growth. But you are not yet born of God—not yet composed of spirit—not yet immortal. If you are not yet truly

converted—a genuine Christian—then you have not yet even begun this process!

Born Again at the Resurrection

1. Can flesh and blood inherit God’s Kingdom? 1 Corinthians 15:50.What must happen before we can be born as divine sons in God’s Family? 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

COMMENT: Whatever is born of spirit Is spirit, said Jesus (John 3:6). But we have not yet been born of spirit. We are STILL FLESH AND BLOOD! If you think you have already been "born again," then take the "pin test." Stick a pin in your finger. Do you feel pain? Does your finger bleed? Then you are still flesh and blood—you haven’t been "born again." When Christ was resurrected—"born again"—He was able to pass through solid walls (John 20:19,John 3:26). Do you think those who claim to have been "born again" can match this feat?

Obviously, any human beings who claim to be already born again are terribly mistaken, for they are still flesh and blood. Jesus said you must be "born of spirit"—you must become composed of spirit—to ever see or enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3,John 3:5). And so the new birth is something yet to occur at the resurrection! But exactly why aren’t all true Christians already born of God? Notice:

2. What are Christians exhorted to do in this life? 2 Peter 3:18;Ephesians 4:15.How and by whom are they to be "fed" and nurtured so they may grow into the stature of Christ? 1 Peter 5:1-2;Ephesians 4:11-13.

COMMENT: The Father begets. He does not "bring forth"; the mother does that, later. After the father’s part, which initiates the PROCESS, there is always a lapse of time leading to final birth. At the time of begettal, birth (parturition) has not yet occurred. In the case of human beings, it follows about nine months later.

During the intervening time, just as the mother nourishes and protects the unborn son or daughter in her womb during the gestation period, so the true Church is commissioned to nourish and protect true Christians in her spiritual womb—to "feed the flock." God’s spirit-begotten children must be nourished on the spiritual food supplied by God—the words of Scripture— and live by every word of God, in order to grow up spiritually.

If by the return of Jesus Christ we have grown and matured in spiritual character, we will become born "children of God," being "children of the resurrection" as Christ was at His resurrection. We will then no longer be subject to death (Luke 20:35-36). But if the spirit—begotten child of God does not grow spiritually, he can become a spiritual miscarriage—an abortion.

3. Speaking of the resurrection, when the second birth will occur, what did Paul say regarding the new body Christians will receive? 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.Will they become as Jesus Christ is today? Php 3:20-21;1 John 3:2;Matthew 17:1-2;Revelation 1:13-16;Matthew 13:43;Daniel 12:3.

COMMENT: Because God is spirit, when one is "born" of his heavenly Father he will BE SPIRIT—he will be composed of the same substance of which God is composed. He will be given a spirit body just like Christ’s and will be GLORIFIED and given tremendous SPIRITUAL POWER. The spiritual power and glory "born-again" Christians shall receive at the resurrection will be so great that it will make their spirit bodies shine as the sun, and make their raiment dazzling white!

And all who are thus "born of God" will be able to see God because they will be in the Kingdom—the divine Family—of God! The Great Difference Between "Begotten" and "Born"

Most professing Christians assume they were "born again" when they first "accepted Christ." Then by misapplying the King James Version's rendition of 1 John 3:9,"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," many also assume that they are no longer capable of sinning in this life. That assumption is false! Notice:

1. Did the Apostle John say that Christians do sometimes commit sins? 1 John 1:8-10.Did he use the present tense of the verb in 1 John 1:8? Then he meant they sin after becoming Christians, didn't he? Notice that he includes himself by saying "we."

2. Was the Apostle Paul beset with recurring sin long after he repented and received—was begotten by—the Holy Spirit? Romans 7:14-25.Is there a just man on earth who does not at some time commit sin? Ecclesiastes 7:20.So isn't it plain that Christians in this mortal flesh are not now perfect—not yet born of God?

3. Now notice 1 John 5:18.Does this verse further substantiate the fact that Christians are not yet born of God?

COMMENT: The person who has been finally "born of God" will not sin any longer. Once we are born of God at the resurrection we will be able to live without ever sinning again. How? Simply because we will then possess the fullness of God's perfect character and divine nature. We will no longer possess a nature which can fall victim to sin and Satan's influence. But as long as we are only "begotten" of God we must "keep ourselves"— we must continue to resist the evil temptations of the flesh. Such a one can commit sin. When caught off guard or in a moment of weakness, we can and often do sin! But we cannot "practice [or continually live in] sin" and be the begotten sons of God (1 John 3:5-6).

Life, to the begotten Christian, is a constant struggle against Satan's influence which is the cause of the evil side of man's nature. (The origin of the evil characteristics of "human nature" will be covered in Lesson 9.) Although he has now received the begettal of God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), he still manifests the traits of human nature as well, and the one wars against the other (Galatians 5:17). But what about the Old Testament men of God? How can we prove whether any of them were either begotten or born of God? Let's understand:

4. Did David have God's Holy Spirit? Psalms 51:10-11.What about all the "holy men of old," including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? 2 Peter 1:21;Romans 8:14;Luke 13:28.And yet, was Jesus Christ the "Firstborn from the dead"? Colossians 1:15,Colossians 1:18.

COMMENT: Now since those Old Testament personages had God's Holy Spirit, and yet Christ was first to be born of God by virtue of His resurrection, then it follows that those men of old were merely "begotten" of God—not yet "born" into His Family. And the same is TRUE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN SINCE CHRIST! The Greek Word Gennao

Much of the confusion about being "born again" has resulted from misinterpreting the original Greek of the New Testament. With one exception (James 1:15-18)the Greek word used in reference to spiritual begettal and birth—spiritual salvation—is always gennao. This word means

both "to conceive," or "to beget," and also "to bear," or "to be born"—all or any part of the whole process which produces a new individual human being; whereas in English we use two separate verbs—"begotten" and "born."

Since both begettal and birth are included in the meaning of gennao, we must often let the Bible interpret the Bible in order to know which meaning is intended in a particular passage.

Here are several examples where the Greek word should rightly have been rendered begotten, not born: John 1:12-13;1 John 2:29;1 John 4:7;1 John 5:1 (three times);1 John 5:4.The King James Version is correct by using "begotten" in 1 Corinthians 4:15;Hebrews 1:5 and 1 John 5:1.

Now what about the scriptures that call Christ the "ONLY-begotten"? (John 1:14,John 1:18;John 3:16;1 John 4:9.) Do these, after all, disprove the truth that true Christians are only "begotten" of God's Spirit, growing toward being born of God at the resurrection? Of course not! The simple answer is that all these verses are referring to Christ's miraculous begettal in His mother Mary's womb. Christ's physical begettal and birth (gennao) were unique. No other person—ever—has been begotten by the Spirit of the Father in a human mother's womb! In this sense He is—and always shall be—"ONLY-begotten." But many have been "begotten again" (1 Peter 1:3)to ultimately become—through the process of spiritual growth and birth—the spirit-born sons of God.

You MUST Be Born Again!

What God created at the time described in the first chapter of Genesis was a physical creation. Man, made of the dust of the ground, was the MATERIAL being which God planned to mold, shape and form into a perfect SPIRITUAL creation. He pictures us as the clay, Himself as the Potter— forming us into the spiritual image of Himself!

God uses human reproduction to picture the process by which He is reproducing Himself. Each human since Adam and Eve started from a tiny ovum, the size of a pinpoint, produced in the body of the mother. But the egg is incomplete of itself. It lives only about 48 hours, according to some authorities. Unless fertilized by the life-giving sperm cell from the human father within the limited time, it dies. A human life can only begin when that sperm cell impregnates—enters—the ovum.

Spiritually speaking, each human mind is like an egg. Each of us was BORN INCOMPLETE—able to live only a relatively short span of years. We were made to need the impregnating spiritual life of God's Holy Spirit so we could be created in God's spiritual "image" and live forever! The physical ovum, once it is fertilized, becomes a begotten human life called an embryo. The mother's womb nourishes and protects it—carrying it in that part of her body where she may best protect it from physical injury or harm—until it has grown enough to be born. After a number of weeks, the embryo develops to what is called a fetus, and at birth it is called a human baby.

Likewise God's CHURCH protects and spiritually feeds begotten Christians with the Word of God so they may GROW SPIRITUALLY (2 Peter 3:18)in the divine character of God until ready to be born into His Family. But there is one great difference in this analogy! The physical fetus does not attain physical and mental maturity before birth. However, the spirit-begotten Christian must attain a reasonable measure of spiritual maturity before he is spirit-born. The newborn physical babe's main growth occurs after birth, but this is a type of the spiritual growing which spiritually begotten Christians must do before their spiritual birth (1 Peter 1:23;1 Peter 2:1-2). Christ did not grow into

spiritual perfection after He was resurrected, but during His human lifetime, setting us the example, being made perfect (Hebrews 2:10Hebrews 5:8-9).

Surely nobody will be foolish enough to suggest that when Christ was BORN the very son of God by the resurrection (Romans 1:4)He was resurrected as a tiny infant composed of spirit! He was resurrected full grown. How did the apostles know He was the same Jesus? Because they knew what Jesus looked like—and in His resurrected body He looked the same as He had before in the flesh, except He now was composed of spirit instead of flesh and blood! When we are "born again"—born of God, changed into spirit bodies at the resurrection—we, too, shall look essentially as we do now, as far as physical features are concerned. But the resurrected body will be a different body—composed of SPIRIT instead of flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:35-44). Now what, exactly, is spiritual growth? It is CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT!

Such character is the ability, as a free moral agent, to discern right from wrong—the true values from the false—truth from error—and then to make the right choice or decision, even against self-desire, impulse or temptation; plus the will and self-discipline to resist the wrong and to DO the right. But as mentioned before, we must BEGIN developing spiritual character and grow toward spiritual adulthood during this life—NOT AFTER we are born of God at the resurrection! Our vile, carnal nature (Romans 8:7;Jeremiah 17:9)must be gradually changed Now! This spiritual growth comes by feeding on the Word of God, through prayer and wholehearted participation in the Work of God.

Then, when the glorified Christ returns to earth the second time, we shall be resurrected, or instantaneously changed, into bodies that will be like His (1 John 3:1-2)--full grown—adult! At that instant, our present physical bodies will be made like His glorified body—"BORN AGAIN" AS MEMBERS OF GOD’S OWN FAMILY—as God’s own glorious offspring with eternal life inherent within ourselves—as His immortal SONS to reign along with Jesus Christ our elder BROTHER!

That, according to your Bible, is what it means to be "born again." God help you to comprehend this glorious truth, and become one of His spiritually begotten children!

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished the test, check your choices with the correct answers at the end of this lesson, and then rate yourself.

1. "God" A. is one person. B. is a family presently composed of only two persons. C. is a "trinity" of three persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. D. has no plans for expanding His Family-Kingdom.

2. The divine Person who became Jesus Christ. A. was the "Spokesman" of the God Family in Old Testament times. B. was never the Logos or "Word" of God. C. was never seen by man in Old Testament times. D. did not exist until the Father begot Him.

3. The Spirit of God A. is a divine being. B. Is the very power of the God Family. C. may be touched and felt. D. Is not everywhere.

4. The Father and Son A. are both included in the original uniplural Hebrew word for God—Elohim. B. have always had that relationship to one another C. are of equal authority D. both dealt with mankind Old Testament times.

5. God originally created A. animals that evolved into their own kinds. B. man after the God kind. C. physical man in God’s "likeness" and "image." D. man of spirit.

6. Man was created A. as the ultimate, completed, finished product. B. as only the clay model which God would shape and develop in His own spiritual character. C. with perfect spiritual character. D. as a glorified being.

7. When Jesus spoke of being "born again," Nicodemus A. understood exactly what He meant. B. thought He meant "be baptized and live a Christian life." C. knew He was talking about a literal birth, but did not understand that it was a spiritual birth. D. did not realize Jesus was talking about the subject of birth.

8. To be "born again" A. Is to be changed into higher level of human being. B. is merely a sentimental experience. C. means to be changed. into a literal immortal member of the God Family! D. is just a metaphorical expression Jesus used in talking to Nicodemus.

9. One who is born of God’s spirit A. is a nebulous ghost. B. will have no great power. C. will be like the angels, but not like God. D. is spirit.

10. True Christians now A. are already born of God and are not able to sin. B. are only begotten of God’s Spirit. C. are already inheritors of God’s Kingdom D. are in no need of growing in God’s spiritual character before being "born again" at the resurrection

True or False

11. The Logos—the "Word" or "Spokesman"—was a member of the God Kingdom before being miraculously begotten in Mary’s womb. T F

12. The Spiritual begettal of a Christian by the Spirit of God is analogous to the physical begettal of an ovum by the sperm of a human father. T F

13. True Christians call the Father of Jesus Christ" Our Father in heaven" because tradition says they should, not because the Father is now begetting many sons to become "born again" brothers of Jesus Christ. T F 14. The Greek word gennao describes a process which includes both begettal and birth. T F 15. It is impossible for us to sin once we have been begotten by God’s Spirit. T F Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand column to the correctly

16. LORD, YHWH, Rock

A. The Holy Spirit

B. At the resurrection

17. Gennao

C. Character development

D. Never been seen

18. True Christians

E. The Father

F. Spirit begotten

19. Spiritual growth

G. Begettal only

H. Birth only

20. "Born again"

I Begettal and birth

J. Jesus Christ

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself l-B 5-C 9-D 13-F 17-I 19-20 correct excellent 2-A 6-B 10-B 14-T 18-F 16-18 correct good 3-B 7-C 11-T 15-F 19-C 13-15 correct fair 4-A 8-C 12-T 16-J 20-B

Lesson 09

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 9 What is Real Repentance?

What does it mean to "repent"? Is it "accepting Christ"? Is real repentance merely an emotional feeling? And is repentance really necessary for salvation? The answers to these crucial questions are found in your Bible. Beginning with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, every human being has walked contrary to God's way of life. We have all contributed our share to the sins of this world (Romans 5:12).

We have all performed the "works of the flesh"—fulfilling the inordinate desires and lusts of our minds and bodies—because we have all walked according to the course of this world as set by "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

Since all of humanity has sinned, all have therefore earned the penalty of sin, which is eternal death—cessation of life forever! As Paul put it:

"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death... For the wages of sin is [eternal] death... (Romans 6:21-23).

All human beings who have not repented of their sins are, so to speak, on spiritual "death row"—awaiting execution of a justly deserved ultimate capital punishment. This eternal penalty was earned by simply "doing what comes naturally"—sinning!

Divine Pardon But God, in His vast mercy, has provided a way by which we may avoid paying that extreme penalty: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). A loving God wishes that all would claim the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for the remission of their personal sins. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:8-10).

There is only this one way to be covered by Christ's sacrifice—only one way to enter into eternity as a glorified member of the God Family. And it involves repentance!

Acts 2:38 summarizes the whole salvation process in just one verse. And one of the very first words of that famous passage is "Repent"! So repentance is the first vital step to salvation. Jesus declared: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3-5). But what is real repentance in God's sight—as revealed in His inspired Word? What does it involve—what do we have to Do? A Change of Direction "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...," said Peter (Acts 3:19).

God tells us there is something we must do before He will apply the sacrifice of Christ to pay the penalty of our sins. We must demonstrate that we no longer wish to continue in the way of life

which leads to eternal death. We do so by changing our way of living. That change of direction is called "repentance" in biblical terminology. But what, exactly, do we repent of?

Sin!

Actions and deeds which are contrary to God’s law are simply defined as "sin." Sin is the violation or transgression of any of God’s great spiritual laws. Notice the definition of sin in the Bible: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).

Sin, however, is not always a wrong deed. Sometimes we sin by not doing what is right or good. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (1 John 4:17). To repent of sin, then, simply means to "change direction." We turn from the way of self-indulgence and "get" to the way of "give." We stop serving the inordinate lusts of our own flesh and begin to serve others. We turn from selfishness to selflessness. When we begin demonstrating our willingness to change and ask God to forgive our past way of life, He applies the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. We are then freed from the crushing guilt of sin and its penalty. We are forgiven and our conscience is cleared. The penalty of sin—eternal death—no longer hangs over our head.

Paul explained it this way: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). How beautifully simple!

Now, let’s begin to understand the vital details.

LESSON 9 What is The "Natural" State of Man?

Real repentance involves change on our part. But why change? And change what? To really answer these questions, we need to understand the natural state of every individual prior to repentance and conversion.

1. God inspired the prophet Jeremiah to describe the basic motivations of the human mind. How does our Creator characterize the natural mind, or "heart," of man? Jeremiah 17:9.Is the natural, unconverted mind of every human being grossly subject to vanity and sin? Romans 8:7-8,Romans 8:20.

2. What are the natural inclinations of the "carnal," physically oriented, unconverted human mind? Galatians 5:19-21;Romans 1:28-32;James 4:1-3.Where do these attitudes of sin actually originate—who is the "father" of sin? John 8:38-44;1 John 3:8;Ephesians 2:2-3.

COMMENT: Incredible as it may sound, the natural state of man—what we commonly call "human nature"—is imparted to mankind by that great fallen archangel known as Satan the devil!

Satan is revealed as "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), who has deceived all nations (Revelation 12:9). He is further revealed as "...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

Satan works in people by "broadcasting" his basic attitude to the mind. He is actually "on the air," so to speak, surcharging the air around the world. The spirit that is in every human (Job 32:8;1 Corinthians 2:11)which we discussed in Lesson 5, is "in tune" with Satan’s "wavelength." The devil

does not broadcast in the words of any language; he does not broadcast in sounds. He broadcasts attitudes of vanity, selfishness, greed, covetousness, lust, jealousy, criticism, envy, resentment, hatred, bitterness and rebellion which our minds receive, perhaps somewhat like a radio receives electromagnetic signals.

These attitudes of Satan in the human mind are actually what we call "human nature." It is in reality Satan’s nature which he broadcasts to our minds.

Few people realize that "human nature" has a spiritual side and a physical side. On its spiritual side, it is vanity. Vanity loves to exalt the self. It is self-centered. It is selfish and greedy. It "comes natural" to resent and resist authority.

Even a child begins very early to resist the authority of his parents. As he grows and matures, this tendency to be hostile toward authority increases. On the physical side, there are "natural" physical pulls and drives that seek to be satisfied regardless of any resultant injury or harm that may come to others or the self. Obviously there are certain physical desires that are not wrong and which God created in us. But when lust and improper use enter the picture, these desires become sin!

3. Therefore, aren’t the expressions of Satan’s nature criminal in God’s sight? 1 John 3:4.

COMMENT: A well-known cartoon series is titled, "There Oughta’ Be a Law." And indeed there is a law against the works of "human nature." It is the Ten Commandment law of God. The expression of mankind’s Satan-inspired nature is clearly illegal in God’s sight!

Let’s take another look at the way man’s acquired nature expresses itself. The "natural" mind, under the influence of Satan’s wavelength, loves itself above all else. It is extremely selfish. Next to itself, it loves that which belongs to it or is in some way connected to it—persons, concepts, material possessions. All these are a part of a larger "self"--like a little empire. This "self empire" even broadens to include the social or occupational group of which the person is a member; then it expands further to include his state, region or nation, and ultimately the whole human society with the beliefs, customs and ideologies which are a part of it. This is the "self" that humanity loves ahead of God and ahead of any other supposed opposer or "outsider." But don’t some few people really love others?--"put themselves out"- spending their time serving? Certainly, to a degree, some have learned it is better to give than to receive. Perhaps they have not followed the devil’s philosophy as far as others who are totally "out for number one." Perhaps a few of God’s teachings in the Bible have "rubbed off" on them. But most of the time even apparently altruistic deeds have an ulterior selfish motive—believe it or not!

Those whom God will ultimately change from mortal humans to the divine likeness of God—those who will be born as the very sons of God—are those who repent of this "natural" state of mind and its past sinful actions, and then strive to overcome it from that point on.

4. What, therefore, did Jesus say we are to become like if we expect to enter the Kingdom of God? Matthew 18:2-4.

COMMENT: Most little children do not exhibit the same tendencies of "human nature" as do older children, teenagers and mature adults. We think of very little children as being "sweet" and "innocent," lacking the selfish reasoning of their older counterparts. But somewhere along the line

the attitude of Satan began to make inroads in our minds. We gradually began to be hostile and defiant toward authority to varying degrees. We began to be resentful of being told what to do. We began to be subject to the whims that sprang from the desires of our flesh. Our whole thought processes began to be concerned more with "I," "my," and "me." As a result of the influence of Satan's "broadcasting," we have all fostered and harbored these wrong attitudes. And so, as Paul was inspired of God to write, "There is none righteous, no, not one..." (Romans 3:9-18,Romans 3:23; also see Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Now stop for a moment and contrast the "natural" mind of a human being with that of God. God is not preoccupied with self. He is totally outgoing in character. He loves all people. Rather than take from them, He wants to give them blessings out of His great love and concern for them. He is not hostile, defiant, rebellious, resentful, selfish.

God wants everyone of us to eventually become like Him. Therefore He wants us to turn from and strive to overcome the evil influence of the devil's attitude on our thinking and doing while still flesh and blood. This is essentially what repentance is all about!

It All Began in the Garden of Eden When God created Adam and Eve, He made them physically perfect. They were created in the shape and image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). And everything about them was "good" (Genesis 1:31).

They were not composed of spirit but of flesh made of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7;Genesis 3:19). And they had a natural self-concern. God gave this concern to humans for a good and wonderful purpose. It causes us to have a natural and proper interest for our own welfare, our lives, our physical bodies.

Remember, God nowhere says that it is wrong or sinful to have a right and proper love for self: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it..." (Ephesians 5:29).

However, we are told to love others as much as we love ourselves (Matthew 19:19;Matthew 22:39;Mark 12:33;Ephesians 5:28). It is only when we love ourselves beyond the necessary self-concern, and at the expense of others, that it becomes sin. When Adam and Eve were created, their nature was "neutral" toward God. It was not antagonistic to God. Neither was there any built-in "programmed" tendency to do right and to obey Him. They were—as first created—entirely humble and teachable, like little children (Matthew 18:3-4). But then the devil appeared. Cunningly appealing to Eve's natural self-concern, he first tempted her and then Adam (through his wife—Genesis 3:6,Genesis 3:17).

Adam and Eve let the devil appeal to their desire to be "wise." Therefore they took to themselves the knowledge of what is good and what is evil—deciding for themselves right from wrong. In so doing, they rebelled against God's authority, disobeyed the law—the command—He had given them, and sinned. By this act they chose and acquired the "nature" or attitude of sin from Satan. This is how sin "entered into the world" by one man, Adam (Romans 5:12). And the death penalty has passed on to all; not because of Adam's sin—not by heredity—but because "all have [likewise] sinned" (same verse).

All of us, as little babies, had a humble, teachable nature like Adam and Eve. But as we grew older we unwittingly allowed our minds to be influenced by Satan in the wrong direction. We, too, have

therefore sinned (first against our parents, then against God), having become antagonistic, hostile, and "carnal" beyond the mere fact of being fleshly. An About-face! The original words in the Hebrew and Greek from which "repent" and "repentance" are translated, mean to turn, to change direction. And true repentance is exactly that. It is a complete about-face from disobedience toward God to obedience, love and cooperation with Him.

True "repentance" is coming to a full realization that we have rebelled against our Maker—against His way and His righteous law. It means that we come to abhor ourselves for our self-willed, rebellious, sinful past. We must be truly broken up and ready now, with God's help, to bury our old natures, quit sinning, quit rebelling and submit to God with all our hearts. The time of repentance is the crisis of your life. It is the turning point in your entire destiny! When we are finally brought to real repentance, we mean business. We are ready, in every phase of our lives, to say: "Yes, Lord...your will be done." In real repentance, we have become completely sick and tired of our own selfish ways. We are truly sorry for our sins—and we are ready and willing to make a permanent change. We are now ready to "turn around and go the other way"—GOD'S way.

Learning this great lesson of our own helplessness, misery and inadequacy apart from God is a vital step toward attaining the real purpose of our lives. Once we have learned this, our Creator can begin the process of creating spiritual character in us by placing within us His Holy Spirit--His nature—which will give us the spiritual power to conquer and overcome the inordinate Satan-inspired pulls of the mind and flesh.

You and I were born incomplete—in great need of personal contact with God through His Spirit. You need to face that fact squarely and, asking God's guidance and help, seek to receive the Holy Spirit! (The subject of the Holy Spirit—what it is, how you receive it and what it does for you--will be thoroughly covered in Lesson 11.) True Repentance Is of the Heart 1. Should true repentance be a deep, moving and heartfelt experience? Joel 2:12-13.

COMMENT: God will not accept those whose "repentance" is only outward, or where there is no real change of attitude and actions. Notice it again:

"... Turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments [outward display]...." True repentance requires total mental and emotional involvement.

2. Does a heartfelt repentant attitude open the way to a close and saving relationship with God? Psalms 34:18.

3. Is spiritual repentance clearly toward God? Acts 20:21.

COMMENT: Sin is against God—He is the Lawgiver whose perfect law we have broken. To repent means to be so humbled and broken up by the thought of having rebelled against the living, Holy God—so abhorrent of our deceitfulness, vanity, and selfishness—that in real contrition we turn to God for mercy, forgiveness and the help we so desperately need in order to overcome.

4. What did Job say, when finally stripped of his self-righteous shell? Job 42:5-6.

COMMENT: "Now mine eye seeth thee," said Job. For the first time, after his ego had been deflated completely, Job got his man-centered mind off himself and really grasped that God is the

center of the universe (chapters 36 through 41). "Wherefore I abhor myself, and REPENT in dust and ashes"!

Some have thought repentance is merely a matter of being thankful that they are so "good" they have been able to see the truth and are now accepting it. That is not repentance. That is self-righteousness—sin--something more to be repented of.

Everyone of us must ultimately come to see God as Job did. Try to see yourself through God's eyes and put Him foremost in your mind. If you do, then you will begin to love God as Jesus instructs (Matthew 22:37). At this point you might ask: "I can see the need for repentance, but how would I go about it?"

First of all, you should understand that you can't drum up a deep feeling of abhorrence for your sins and your sinful nature on your own. How, then, is it possible for a human being to come to that kind of repentance? How can one even start to change from self-centered love to God-love? The answer is, it has to come from God!

5. Does God's goodness and mercy lead one to repentance? Romans 2:4.And is He patient and loving in leading one to repentance? Same verse.

6. Is it God who grants us repentance? 2 Timothy 2:25.Also see Acts 11:18.

7. Did Jesus plainly say no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him? John 6:44,John 6:65.

COMMENT: In light of the above scripture, how does one know if the Father is "drawing," or calling him? If you have understood what you have studied thus far, and you want to come to God, you are being called!

It is an Unconditional Surrender to God

Right now, before Christ comes to impose His laws and loving rule on mankind and forces this whole world to submit to Him, He is calling upon individuals to surrender voluntarily to His authority, for to "repent" also means to surrender ourselves to God's will unconditionally.

During World War II, when the Allied High Command called on Germany, Italy and Japan to surrender, they demanded unconditional surrender, which meant the defeated Axis Powers gave themselves up completely—without any strings attached—to the victors. This is what Christ requires of us today!

Allied armies then occupied the conquered territory, enforcing the will of the occupying powers. Similarly, once we completely surrender—repent--to Christ, and are baptized, God's Spirit comes within us. It then begins to influence our ways of thinking and living. No one thought it strange that the Americans, British or French should claim the right to tell the defeated Axis Powers what to do—to influence and regulate the lives of the conquered. This is the same right that God claims once we have completely surrendered to Him.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit does not come within us for the purpose of taking away our free choice or will—our free moral agency. It won't force us to do anything. It will only LEAD US in the direction of God's truth and give us added strength to follow its leading and do the will of God. But

more about the Holy Spirit in Lesson 11.

1. Does surrendering to God also mean that we put Him ahead of and above all else? Matthew 10:36-38.Does this extend to include our own life also? Luke 14:26.

COMMENT: "Hate" in Luke 14:26 means to love less by comparison as the parallel account in Matthew 10:36-38 shows.

2. Though it sounds paradoxical, did Jesus say that whoever would quit being his old sinful selfish self, and give up or "lose" his life to Him, would live? Matthew 16:24-25.

COMMENT: Jesus is actually talking about giving one's life in total obedience and service to God—even giving up all things, including our own lives, if He should ever require that of us—in return for eternal life. But repentance—surrendering to God—is not a matter of "giving up" everything good. Repentance is positive. Not only do you escape the penalties of sin through repentance, it is also the way to innumerable positive benefits in this life!

Repentance emphatically does not mean we must give up the use or appreciation of material things. What God is interested in is the attitude we have toward material things—whether we seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

God does wish for us to prosper and be in good health (3 John 1:2). He wants us to give up only those things which are bad for us—which hurt us spiritually and physically. Repentance and conversion make possible our intelligent use of God's material creation through the guidance of His laws and His Spirit.

3. Is surrendering to Christ something to be considered lightly? Or must we first "count the cost"—realizing the depths of what surrendering to God really entails? Luke 14:28-30.

We Must Turn to God's Law

1. How may we become cleansed of sin—made acceptable to God? Is it through Christ's sacrifice and His shed blood which covers—blots out—our sins and reconciles us to God? Romans 5:8-10.What must we do to have this blood applied to us? Acts 3:18-19.

2. Are those whose sins have been forgiven pictured symbolically as having had their clothing made "white" by the cleansing blood of Christ? Revelation 7:13-14.

3. Is white, clean, clothing symbolic of the righteousness— right-doing— God requires of those who would enter His Kingdom? Revelation 19:8-9.What will happen to those whose clothing remains soiled, or full of sin, and have not "put on" the righteousness of God? Matthew 22:11-13.

4. What is David's Holy Spirit-inspired definition of "righteousness"- isn't it clearly the keeping of God's commandments? Psalms 119:172.

5. Isn't it the law of God to which the "wicked"—all who have sinned—are to turn? Ezekiel 18:21-22.

6. Whom did Paul say are justified before God—the hearers or the doers of God's law? Romans 2:13.Did Paul make it plain that even though the unmerited pardon of our sins is by the grace of God through faith in Christ's sacrifice, nevertheless a Christian is obligated to God to keep the law

of God? Read Romans 3:31 and all of Romans 6:1-23.

7. Isn't this clearly why Jesus said what He did to the young rich man? Matthew 19:16-17.Did Jesus enumerate enough of the commandments to make it clear He was indeed talking about the TEN COMMANDMENTS? Matthew 19:18-19.

COMMENT: Because we can't save ourselves and can't keep God's law perfectly of ourselves, the prevalent teaching today is that Jesus did it all for us—that we don't have to do anything except believe He did it all for us and accept Him as our Savior. Thus, millions today have been led to believe that God imputes Jesus' righteousness to us, counting us as righteous because of His righteousness—while we continue sinning.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

Jesus did not live a good life for us—in our stead. We are not excused from keeping God's commandments, striving to live a righteous life, overcoming and growing in spiritual character.

8. Is the law of God good? Romans 7:12.Is it just and holy? Same verse.

COMMENT: The law is the way to peace, to happiness, to joy. It is God's greatest gift to mankind—given to make man happy, to lead him into the full, abundant life, to protect his happiness and lead him into eternal life. The evil results are not caused by the law, but by the breaking of it!

9. How did Jesus sum up God's law? Matthew 22:36-40.In what one word can God's law and the keeping of it be summed up? John 14:15;John 15:9-10;2 John 1:5-6; Romans 13:8-10.

COMMENT: The whole spiritual intent and purpose of the law is love. Jesus showed that God's law has two basic aspects to it: The first is to show us how to love God, which is the basic intent of the first four of the Ten Commandments. The second is to show us how to love our neighbor, our fellow human beings. The last six of the Ten Commandments teach us how to do this.

10. Is God's law like a mirror which reflects our sins back to us? James 1:22-25;Romans 7:7.Does keeping the law result in blessings? James 1:25,last part.

COMMENT: The law of God is a spiritual mirror into which one may look to find and see clearly the spiritual dirt—sin—on one's mind and heart. The mirror is not responsible for the presence of the dirt, or for the harm the dirt may cause. The function of the mirror—the law—is to show the dirt, so that you may do something about it (repent of sin and become cleansed by Christ's blood) and thus become genuinely free from fears, from misery, from penalties of every kind, and free from bondage to the devil's way.

11. Does God promise material blessings for those who keep His law? Deuteronomy 28:1-14;Leviticus 26:13.

COMMENT: We cannot necessarily expect God to make us wealthy, but we certainly can expect Him to provide for all our necessities—and perhaps even add a few luxuries as we are able to handle them—as we strive to please Him.

12. What other great benefits do we derive from obeying the laws of God? Psalms 19:7-11;Psalms 119:165.

Everyone is Commanded to Repent!

1. Six hundred years before Christ, what was God’s warning to the nation of Israel as given through His prophet Ezekiel? Ezekiel 33:7-9.Whose way were the people to turn from in repentance? Ezekiel 33:9, Ezekiel 33:11; Proverbs 14:12;Proverbs 28:26.

COMMENT: The ancient Israelites did that which was right in their own eyes because they were motivated by their natural, disobedient minds (Jeremiah 17:9;Romans 8:7-8). They did not have God’s Spirit within them which would have enabled them to resist Satan and to obey God. This was because the Holy Spirit was not generally available in Old Testament times.

Ancient Israel’s terrible example is a lesson to us who can receive the Holy Spirit. By possessing the Holy Spirit, we can bring forth the "fruit of the Spirit" enumerated in Galatians 5:22-23.But without the Holy Spirit, we—as did they—bring forth the fruits called the "works of the flesh." Some of these "works" are listed in Galatians 5:19-21.All are transgressions of God’s holy, righteous, spiritual law.

Mankind today is still learning the hard way by experiencing these "works," or results, of doing what comes naturally.

2. Only a few decades later, did God use Zechariah to reiterate the same call to repentance? Zechariah 1:2-4.

3. What message did God commission the prophet John to proclaim in Judea? Matthew 3:1-8.Notice especially Matthew 3:2 and Matthew 3:8. Also see Acts 19:4.

4. What was Jesus’ message from the beginning of His ministry? Mark 1:14-15.Did He personally command all of His hearers to repent? Matthew 4:17;Luke 13:1-5.

5. Did Christ say repentance would be preached among all nations? Luke 24:47.

6. When the Holy Spirit came on that memorable Day of Pentecost as Jesus had promised it would (Luke 24:49;Acts 1:4-5), what message did God inspire Peter to preach to the multitudes gathered in Jerusalem? Acts 2:37-38;Acts 3:19.

COMMENT: The same proclamation to repent is a vital part of the message of God’s Church in this age. What Peter commanded his listeners to do is what God commands us to do today!

7. Does the Bible show there are no exceptions—that all have sins of which they must repent? 1 John 1:8-10;1 John 5:19;Romans 3:23;Romans 5:12;1 Kings 8:46;Ecclesiastes 7:20.

COMMENT: There are many who feel they are "good humble folk" who have never personally done anything really wrong in their lives and so have little, if anything, of which to repent. But your Bible says ALL HAVE SINNED!

8. Does God specifically command all people everywhere to repent? Acts 17:30.

9. But if anyone chooses to remain in an unrepentant attitude, what does he lay up for himself? Romans 2:5.What is Jesus' solemn warning to those who will never repent? Luke 13:3-5.What will be their ultimate fate unless they do repent? Romans 6:23;Revelation 20:15.

Beware of False Repentance

Don't make the mistake of overlooking repentance as a necessary step to salvation. Don't assume that you can be made right with God by some man-devised method which is falsely called "repentance."

Repentance is not only a matter of feeling. It is not just a matter of stirring up one's emotions. It is a matter of heart and mind as well as emotion. It is a heartfelt realization that you have thought, spoken, and lived contrary to God's spiritual laws and that you should QUIT doing so!

1. Can people actually worship Christ, acknowledging that He is "Lord," and yet not enter His Kingdom? Matthew 7:21.How else can one worship Him, and yet not be born of God at Christ's coming? Matthew 15:7-9.Then who will enter God's Kingdom? Matthew 7:21,last part.

COMMENT: Listen to what else Jesus said about people who want to worship Him without obedience to God's commands: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.... Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

Man would rather do almost anything else than surrender himself to God. His natural mind (Jeremiah 17:9;Romans 8:7-8)rebels at the thought of submitting to God's law. Therefore men have substituted their own laws and customs for God's commandments, thinking they can still receive salvation by only believing in Christ as their Savior.

Human nature wants to be right, but it doesn't necessarily want to do right! So people often say, "Well, here's the way I look at it"—thus putting their concept of righteousness above the Bible. If it "looks right" to them, it becomes their law. This is nothing but self-righteousness. And we already know where doing what "seems right" to us will lead (Proverbs 14:12;Proverbs 16:25), unless we repent of this kind of thinking.

Clearly, no amount of human works can bring about the forgiveness of sin. Even the great sacrificial laws of the Old Testament could not bring about forgiveness and a clear conscience. They were only a type looking forward to the supreme sacrifice for sins—Jesus Christ—who was to come much later (Hebrews 9:9-14;Hebrews 10:4-10).

There is simply no way we can "make up" for our sins. Beads, indulgences, penance, fastings, or afflicting one's flesh in some other way will not erase the guilt of sin either. You cannot punish yourself for sin, and thus avoid God's punishment. Only the sacrifice of Christ can pay that ultimate penalty. And the only way that sacrifice can be applied to blot out your sins is by accepting it and forsaking your past life of disobedience—by repentance!

2. Just what does Isaiah 64:6 say about "our righteousness"? And what did Jesus say about those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous"? Luke 18:9-14.

3. How did Paul describe mankind in general today? 2 Timothy 3:1-5.Notice especially 2 Timothy 3:5.

COMMENT: Many people profess to be religious—they attend churches- they have a "form of godliness." But, as these verses plainly show, they partake of the very attitudes and practices that have made this present world evil. This is not the repentance God commands. God requires a complete reversal in the direction each one of us has been going. In other words, total repentance of following the ways that seem right to human conscience, and a complete turning around to begin following the way of God as revealed in the Bible.

4. What else does God have to say concerning this present evil world we have all had a part in? 1 John 2:15-17;Romans 12:2.

COMMENT: Here is the very starting point on the way to salvation. God commands us to come out of this world and forsake its wrong ways. No longer being conformed to its ways which are contrary to God's way, we are to become like Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to renew our minds.

5. What is the end result of this world's kind of sorrow, or "repentance"? 2 Corinthians 7:10,last part. But what kind of sorrow for sin does God accept, and where does it lead? 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.

COMMENT: It is commonly believed that a temporary remorseful feeling over past mistakes—without a real "turning" and "change," and beginning to grow in Godly character—is all there is to being "saved."

God says such "repentance" is totally unacceptable and leads only to death! Repentance is something far more than an "experience." True repentance- "Godly sorrow"—involves a complete about-face in our thinking and being, as well as a change of allegiance. The Conversion of Moses 1. To what kind of man does God say He will look with favor—one who is humble and meek? Isaiah 66:2;Psalms 25:9.

2. What kind of man was Moses? Numbers 12:3.Knowing what kind of man Moses was, what did God have in mind to do with him because of Israel's disobedience? Exodus 32:9-10.

3. Did Moses succumb to vanity (as most of us would have done) when God said, "I will make of thee a great nation"? What was his reaction? Exodus 32:11-13.Was he actually responsible for causing God to change His mind? Exodus 32:14. Did Moses go around trying to elevate himself above others? Numbers 11:27-29;Numbers 16:3-5.

COMMENT: Meekness is not necessarily synonymous with weakness, but meekness definitely is the opposite of arrogance. It is the attitude of a repentant mind. Moses was very meek, but he decidedly was not weak. Moses was strong, both physically and spiritually. The converted Moses was more concerned for the good of others than for self. Above all, he was concerned for God's Holy Name. His life, in general, was truly God-centered (Numbers 14:11-20--be sure to read these verses).

4. But had Moses always been meek and humble? Or had he formerly been filled with vanity and self-assertion? Exodus 2:11-14.Did Moses at first think he could deliver Israel by his own power? Acts 7:23-25.What did God have to do to humble him? Acts 7:26-30.

COMMENT: Moses was trained in all the learning of Egypt and was a member of Pharaoh's court. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter (Acts 7:20-21;Exodus 2:10), and was "mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22). But God then began to deal with Moses' arrogance. Moses, in the height of his pride and glory, was struck down. It was God who forced his flight into the wilderness to bring about Moses' conversion. There, for forty years, he was trained—under authority—by a man who apparently really knew the true God (Exodus 2:15-21;all of Exodus 18:1-27). When Moses became meek and humble, God showed him that he could, after all, succeed in delivering Israel. But he would have to do it in and by God's power—not his own!

All of us must also at some point in our lives come to realize our own utter insignificance and need to totally rely on God—as did Moses, Job, Daniel, Paul, and other similar examples recorded in the Bible.

King David's Heartfelt Repentance

Ancient King David is a chief example of one who deeply repented of his sins. One specific example of his sins is probably better known than all the rest. David lusted after Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his military officers. He committed adultery with her. This illicit act resulted in her pregnancy. Then, in an effort to avert suspicion from himself, he attempted a ruse to try to make it appear that Uriah was the father (see 2 Samuel 11:1-27).

Failing in this, David had Uriah placed in the front line of battle and deliberately deserted by the army to make certain he would be killed. Thus David became a murderer in God's sight (2 Samuel 12:9). David had sinned very greatly! But once he came to his senses and realized the gravity of what he had done, he repented of these sins, confessing his guilt: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord" (verse 13). David's sincere, heartfelt repentant attitude endeared him to God. Psalms 51:1-19 shows David's utterly broken-up attitude about his sins. (Be sure to read this entire Psalm.) 1. Did David attempt to justify his sins or to explain them away? Or did he freely confess them? Psalms 51:1-3.

2. What did David beseech God to do for him? Psalms 51:2, Psalms 51:7. Compare with Isaiah 1:16-18.

COMMENT: Hyssop, a small plant or shrub with sponge or brush-like qualities, was a "tool" often used in ceremonies using sprinkled or dabbed blood (Leviticus 14:4-7;Exodus 12:22)to portray forgiveness. Thus David was asking God for spiritual cleansing and forgiveness.

3. Did David admit that he was guilty of many sins? Psalms 51:9.Did he admit that his heart (attitude) had not been right with God? Psalms 51:10.

4. Did David thoroughly abhor his sin? Psalms 51:3. Did he cast himself upon God's mercy? Psalms 51:1.

COMMENT: David did not minimize his sin. He did not attempt to justify it. Nor did he blame it on others.

Rather, he was aghast at what he had done and simply prostrated himself before God and implored His mercy and forgiveness. He made no attempt to "explain it away." He confessed what he had done, what he was, and asked God to clean him up totally. That's the basic attitude we

should have when we repent of our sins.

David was one of the few people of Old Testament times to whom God gave the Holy Spirit (Psalms 51:10-11; 1 Samuel 16:13), for the Holy Spirit was not yet made available (John 7:38-39)except in special circumstances. David obeyed God and overcame by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though at times he did stumble and fall. "For a just [righteous] man falleth seven times, and riseth up again..." (Proverbs 24:16). So David—a man after God's own heart—is soon, at Christ's coming, to be resurrected and born into God's Kingdom as a son of God, and as the King over Israel (Jeremiah 30:9). A Modern-Day Example

There are many ways by which God can bring a man to repentance. We thought it would be of interest to our students to learn how God dealt with Mr Herbert W. Armstrong as revealed in excerpts taken from his autobiography:

"After the flash depression of 1920 had plunged all my major advertising clients into receiverships, sweeping away the publisher's representative business in Chicago, I hung grimly on for two years. It was futile.

"What I totally failed, then, to realize was that God was beginning to deal with me, to strike me down, to take away the 'idols' of business ambitions, and set me in His work for a very special mission. Jonah tried to escape on a ship from a mission of God. Isaiah protested he was unworthy. Jeremiah argued he was too young. Paul had to be knocked down. But it required several knockdowns to deflate me and wean me from a love of this world.

"It was bewildering—utterly frustrating! It seemed as if some mysterious, invisible hand was just disintegrating every business I ever started!

"That was exactly what was happening! The hand of God was taking away every activity on which my heart had been set—the business success before which shrine I had worshipped. This zeal to become important in the business world had become an IDOL. God was destroying the idol. He was knocking me down—again and again! He was puncturing the ego, and deflating the vanity.

"I had been beaten down. God had brought that about—though I didn't realize it then. This made surrender less difficult. Repeated business reverses, failure after failure, had destroyed my self-confidence. I was broken in spirit. The self in me didn't want to die. It wanted to try to get up from ignominious defeat and try again to tread the broad and popular way of vanity and of this world. But now I knew that way was wrong! I knew its ultimate penalty was death. But I didn't want to die now!

"It was truly a battle for life—a life and death struggle. In the end, I lost that battle as I had been losing all worldly battles in recent years.

"I told God I was only a burned-out hunk of junk. In final desperation I threw myself on His mercy. If He could use my life, I would give it to Him—not in physical suicide, but as a living sacrifice, to be used as He willed. It was worth nothing to me any longer.

"Jesus Christ had bought and paid for my life by His death. It really belonged to Him, and I told Him He could have it!

"From then on, this defeated no-good life of mine was God's. I didn't see how it could be worth anything to Him. But it was His to use as His instrument, if He thought He could use it.

"It was humiliating to have to admit my wife had been right and that I had been wrong, in the most serious argument that ever came between us.

"It was shocking, disillusioning, to learn, after intensive study of the Bible for the first time, that what I had been taught from a child in Sunday school, was in so many basic points, the very opposite from what the Bible plainly states!

"I had argued. I commanded her to stop this ridiculous nonsense. I had said she was crazy!

"Finally I entered into an intensive study of the Bible for the first time in my life. I was determined to prove she was wrong, for her new belief and practice was contrary to the orthodox teaching of the large denominational churches that call themselves Christian. My study started early mornings, lasted often 1:00 to 2:00 a.m.

"But to my utter disappointment and astonishment I found that the popular church teachings and practices were not based on the Bible. They had originated, as research in history had revealed, in paganism.

"The opening of my eyes to the truth brought me to the crossroads of my life.... It meant the final crushing of vanity. It meant a total change of life! It meant real repentance, for now I saw that I had been breaking God's law. I had been rebelling against God. It meant turning around and going the way of God—the way of His Bible—living according to every word in the Bible, instead of according to the ways of society or the desires of the flesh and of vanity.

"It was a matter of which way I would travel for the remainder of my life. I had certainly reached the crossroads! In final desperation, I threw myself on His mercy. If He could use my life I would give it to Him.

"This utter surrender to God—this repentance...was the most bitter pill I ever swallowed. Yet it was the only medicine in all of my life that ever brought a healing!

"For I actually began to realize that I was finding joy beyond words to describe in this total defeat. I had actually found joy in the study of the Bible—in the discovery of new truth heretofore hidden from my consciousness. And in surrendering to God in complete repentance, I found unspeakable joy in accepting Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and my present High Priest.

"Somehow I began to realize a new fellowship and friendship had come into my life. I began to be conscious of a contact and fellowship with Christ, and with God the Father.

"When I read and studied the Bible, God was talking to me and how I loved to listen! I began to pray, and I knew that in prayer I was talking with God. I was not yet very well acquainted with God. But one gets to be better acquainted with another by constant [daily] contact and continuous conversation." This was the experience of deep, heartfelt repentance Herbert W. Armstrong went through—as recorded in volume one of his autobiography. Have You Really Repented? Have you come to the point in your life where you want to give up walking contrary to God and His law, and surrender yourself completely to Him? Have you come to the place where you see yourself as you

really are—as God sees you? Have you "sized yourself up" by means of the Ten Commandments, as magnified by the entirety of God’s Word, and seen where you fall short? Are you willing to keep all of God’s spiritual laws?

Unless you have come to see yourself as Job saw himself; unless you have cried out to God for merciful pardon and forgiveness as David did; unless you have begun to change your attitudes, your thoughts, your actions and your ways; unless you have been really broken up about your past life; unless you have repented from the heart; unless you have made a complete about-face in your life—unless you have done these things, it is clear from what you’ve learned that you simply have not begun to start the Christian way of life! The apostle Paul tells us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ [through the Holy Spirit] is [living] in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). John told the Pharisees and Sadducees, "bring forth therefore fruits meet [fit to show] for repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

How can you examine—prove—your own self? By comparing your life, thoughts, words and actions with the Word of God.

Check the fruits of your life! "By their fruits ye shall know them," Christ said (Matthew 7:20). Does your life reveal the fruits of having the Holy Spirit in you—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, temperance [self-control]? (Galatians 5:22-23.)

God looks to those who are of a meek and contrite spirit—those who tremble before the two-edged sword of His Word. God recognizes a repentant attitude of mind—a broken spirit, a humble seeking for forgiveness and mercy. He will truly honor the attitude of all who are willing to turn from works and deeds which His Word brands as sin.

True repentance requires a permanent change of direction. It is a total commitment to a course from which there is no turning back. It is not a temporary sawdust-trail, tear-jerking emotional response so prevalent today. You have learned that it is something much deeper and vastly more profound! Have you really repented?

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished the test, check your choices with the correct answers at the end of this lesson, and then rate yourself.

1. Repentance A. is an emotional "religious feeling" we must somehow work up to become a Christian. B. is merely "accepting Christ." C. is not really necessary for salvation. D. is the first step toward becoming a true Christian.

2. To "repent" A. means to just feel sorry for one’s past mistakes. B. has nothing to do with making a total commitment to following God’s way of life. C. means to "change direction"—to go the opposite way. D. definitely does not involve a change of direction in any facet of one’s way of living.

3. What, exactly, are we to repent of? A. Absolutely nothing—Christ did it all for us. B. Sin—the transgression of God’s spiritual law (1 John 3:4). C. Certainly not our breaking of the Ten Commandments. D. Whatever our conscience tells us is sin.

4. Where do evil thoughts and desires to commit sin originate? A. From nowhere in particular. B. They have been inherited from Adam and Eve who first sinned. C. From the evil nature God created in each of us. D. Satan—the "prince of the power of the air"—who broadcasts the evil characteristics of his sinful nature to our minds.

5. What is "righteousness"? A. The keeping of God’s commandments. B. Following the dictates of "human nature." C. Following the ways of this world’s society. D. It couldn’t be obedience to the law of God.

6. Which one of the following is not a true statement? A. All mankind since Adam has sinned. B. The wages of sin is eternal death. C. Jesus Christ and the Father command every human being to repent of sin. D. Eternal death is no longer God’s punishment for the unrepentant.

7. The "sorrow of this world" A. leads to true repentance. B. leads to death. C. is required for salvation. D. is what Jesus referred to when He commanded, "Repent!"

8. Real Repentance A. must be deeply sincere and heartfelt. B. is not something God must grant. C. has been experienced by most professing Christians. D. is taught by the churches of this world.

9. David was a man after God’s own heart A. because he sinned grievously.

B. because he was "sorry" for his mistakes. C. because he always was a righteous man. D. because he repented deeply and sincerely of his sins.

10. To examine yourself spiritually A. means to check in a mirror for spiritual "dirt" on your face. B. means to compare your life, thoughts, words and actions with the Word of God. C. means to compare your way of life with the standards of this world. D. does not involve evaluating yourself to see if you have the fruits of God’s Spirit in your life.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. Satan works in people by "broadcasting" his attitudes of sin to the spirit that is in every human mind. T F

12. The characteristics of "human nature"—vanity, selfishness, greed, hatred, etc.—are in reality the characteristics of Satan’s nature. T F 13. Since it is impossible for humans to be perfect like God, there is no use striving for perfection in this life. T F 14. Millions today actually worship Christ in vain. T F 15. To repent means to forsake the really good things of life. T F Draw a line from each phrase In the left-hand column to the correctly related phrase In the right-hand column.

16. Spiritual mirror.

A. Sanctimonious feeling

B. Unconditional surrender

17. Vain worship

C. True Christians

D. Righteousness of God

18. Self-righteousness

E. Love of od

F. Filthy rags - sin!

19. White clothing

G All worship

H. Commands of men

20. Real repentance

I. Reveals dirt

J. God’s law

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-D 5-A 9-D 13-F 17-H 19-20 correct excellent 2-C 6-D 10-B 14-T 18-F 16-18 correct good 3-B 7-B 11-T 15-F 19-D 13-15 correct fair 4-D 8-A 12-T 16-J 20-B

Lesson 10

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 10 Should You Be Baptized? The apostle Peter commanded the crowd gathered in Jerusalem:

"Repent and be baptized every one of you...." But is Acts 2:38 relevant in the space age? Does God require baptism for one to become a Christian today? The ancient ritual of water baptism seems passe to some in the Western world. There are religions today which no longer require literal baptismal rites—especially those entailing total immersion in water. A good many dismiss water baptism as an antiquated ceremony to be relegated to a primitive or medieval church. Should we follow the many in rejecting a literal adherence to this biblical practice? How can you know whether any such custom is just a carryover of old-fashioned, anachronistic human ideas—or really what the Creator of heaven and earth truly wants His followers to practice today? Is Baptism a Required Step? The most direct and vital of all passages concerning water baptism is found in Acts 2:36-42.In his inspired sermon on that momentous day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter indicted his listeners for their part in murdering the Messiah.

Many were cut to the heart with guilt and shame. Their spontaneous response came in a flash: "Men and brethren what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). A very good question. What do you do when you, individually, come to recognize—as this first century group did—that you have been in rebellion against the laws and purposes of your Creator? Notice the inspired answer to their question: "And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’" (Acts 2:38, RSV). The preceding lesson made the necessity for repentance crystal clear. But the very next step, as stated in Acts 2:38,is water baptism.

Baptism, as we shall learn from this study, is clearly a required step in God’s plan of personal salvation for you as an individual. In this extremely important lesson, we will come to understand exactly what God commands concerning water baptism. We will begin by learning the symbolic meaning of baptism. Then we’ll study the Old Testament types that prefigured New Testament baptism, the practice of John the Baptist, Jesus’ personal example, continuing right on down to the apostolic practice in the first century church. This lesson will ask and answer such questions as: What is baptism? What is its biblical history? What is its purpose? What is its meaning for today’s twentieth-century man? Why is it indeed a vital step in achieving personal entrance into the Kingdom of God? The Deeply Symbolic Meaning of Baptism A great deal of symbolism surrounds the subject of baptism. We need to thoroughly understand that symbolism to know exactly why God requires baptism of those who would become true followers of Christ—Spirit-begotten children of God.

1. How did Jesus Christ condemn sin in the flesh? Romans 8:3-4;Hebrews 4:15.Why did He suffer death? 1 Corinthians 15:3.What happened to His dead body? 1 Corinthians 15:4; Romans 8:11.

COMMENT: Christ "condemned" sin by living sinlessly through the power of the Holy Spirit. He died for our sins—His death paid the penalty of sin that we have incurred—and was buried. After three days He was "quickened"—that is, He was made alive, or given life—by God’s Spirit. His resurrection shows He triumphed over sin and death.

2. Is baptism symbolic of one’s death, burial and resurrection from a "grave"? Colossians 2:12-13;Romans 6:2-6.Also read the subsequent verses of Romans 6:1-23 up to and including Romans 6:13.

COMMENT: Just as Christ died for our sins and was buried, our baptism— being plunged into a watery "grave"—is symbolic of the death and burial of our old sinful life. And as Christ was resurrected in newness of life, our coming up out of the waters of baptism is symbolic of our rising up from our "grave" to live a new life free from the guilt of past sins and the death penalty our sins incurred.

Baptism, then, pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It also pictures the death and burial of the sinner and his rising up to begin living a Christian life. Let’s elaborate on the above a little further.

Going down into the water clearly pictures the death of Christ and our old self. Likewise, being buried in the water pictures the burial of Christ, and of our old sinful life. And coming up out of the water pictures Christ’s resurrection, and our coming up to walk henceforth "in newness of life"—in obedience to God’s laws. We now reckon ourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but alive through God and His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 6:11). After baptism and the "laying on of hands" (which we’ll discuss later), Christ begins to "live" within us by means of God’s Spirit (Romans 8:9-10). The Holy Spirit enables us, as we yield to God from that time forward, to resist the devil’s influence which leads us to sin, and to go on to obey God’s spiritual laws (Romans 8:13). The Apostle Paul said: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Water baptism is simply an ordinance of Christ by which we symbolically express our faith in Him as our personal Savior—our belief and acceptance of His death, burial and resurrection. Baptism is also a symbolic outward expression of our sincere and total repentance of our old sinful life—our "burial" of that sinful life. And baptism pictures our rising up to a new life of spiritual obedience to God.

Baptism clearly signifies that our selfish, vain and sinful self has to die. It shows our realization of our own sins, our vanities, our wretchedness. It is an outward acknowledgment of our realization that the old self must die in order that we might rise again to live—this time really live—by God’s laws and commandments as made possible through His Holy Spirit.

Baptism, in the final analysis, shows our total surrender to God. It symbolizes the complete burial of the old sinful self and our beginning a new life surrendered to the will and authority of God. The Flood a Type of Baptism The Old Testament contains significant types which prefigure New Testament water baptism. These foreshadows are vital to our understanding of Christ’s and the apostles’ teachings concerning this practice. We begin with Noah and the Flood.

1. After men had begun to multiply upon the face of the earth, did they sin grievously against God? Genesis 6:5,Genesis 6:11-12. Just how corrupt had mankind become in God’s sight? Same verses.

2. What did God say He would do to the earth’s population as a result of their incorrigible wickedness? Genesis 6:7.By what means of destruction? Genesis 6:17.

COMMENT: Mankind had so completely corrupted itself that God had no other alternative but to put the entire human race out of its self-imposed misery—except for one man and his family.

3. Who, in that world of rampant sin, found grace in God’s sight? Genesis 6:8.Why did God favor Noah? Verse 9. Also notice 2 Peter 2:5 compared with Psalms 119:172.

COMMENT: Noah "walked with God"—He obeyed the voice of God and preached obedience to God’s will. But no one would listen.

4. God told Noah to build an enormous vessel so he and his family could escape the great flood He would bring on rebellious mankind (Genesis 6:14-17). How did Noah demonstrate his belief—his faith—in God’s promise of salvation from the flood—the penalty of the world’s sins? Genesis 6:22;Hebrews 11:7.

COMMENT: Many long, arduous and trying years were required to complete the ark. (Compare Genesis 5:32 with Genesis 7:11.) The pre-flood world had at least a century to repent of their sins before God sent this worldwide flood.

5. Does Noah’s escape from the tremendous flood—a watery "grave" for the sinning world—typify our deliverance from sin’s penalty through the symbolic meaning of water baptism? 1 Peter 3:20-21.

COMMENT: Notice how the Revised Standard Version renders 1 Peter 3:20-21 : "...eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

God provided a way for Noah and his immediate family to escape the old world of sin and the penalty it had incurred for disobedience to God’s laws. Noah believed God when He warned him of the Flood, and Noah obeyed God by building the ark. He demonstrated his faith by his obedience (see James 2:17-26). This is the same kind of active, LIVING faith God expects of us today.

Noah was brought up out of the water that destroyed the sinful world and was saved physically. Today, we can be saved spiritually from the eternal penalty of sin—if we really believe Christ died for our sins and if we symbolically bury them in the waters of baptism.

Israel "Baptized" in the Sea

Another interesting Old Testament type pointing to New Testament baptism was the escape of Israel from Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt.

While the Israelites were in Egypt, they were Pharaoh’s slaves- helpless and powerless under his taskmasters—just as a sinner is the slave of sin (Romans 6:16).

Egypt was a symbol of sin (Revelation 11:8). Pharaoh and his army can be compared to Satan and his demons who bring us into captivity to sin. God commanded Israel to come out of Egypt—sin. Israel obeyed. The Israelites began their exodus out of Egypt under Moses after they applied the blood of the Passover lamb to their door posts (Exodus 12:1-13;Exodus 12:30-37). Their departure from Egypt is a type of our departure— our repentance— from spiritual sin! The blood of the lamb which protected them from the death angel is symbolic of the blood of Christ— our "Passover lamb" (1 Corinthians 5:7)-- whose blood was shed for the remission of our sins. Thus Christ's shed blood saves us from the penalty of eternal death.

1. Whom did God commission to deliver Israel from the clutches of Egyptian bondage? Exodus 3:10-12;Acts 7:35.

2. Is Moses therefore referred to as a type or prefigure of Christ? Acts 7:37;Acts 3:20-22.What did God send Jesus Christ to deliver us from? Romans 3:24-25.

COMMENT: Moses, sent by God to deliver Israel from physical bondage, was a type pointing to Christ whom God sent to deliver repentant believers from the spiritual bondage of sin.

3. How did the Israelites react to leaving Egypt behind them? Numbers 33:3.

COMMENT: The Israelites left with great exaltation and elation over their deliverance from the bondage (sin) of Egypt.

4. While the Israelites were rejoicing over their newfound freedom, what did Pharaoh and his army begin to do? Exodus 14:8-9.

COMMENT: Just accepting Christ and His blood for the remission of past sins does not make us forever free from sin. The Israelites thought they were free from the bondage of Egypt—that is until Pharaoh began to pursue them!

5. What did Moses say when the Israelites became fearful of Pharaoh's oncoming army? Exodus 14:13-14.

6. Did God tell them to bog down, give up, and quit, giving up all hope of escaping the Egyptians? Or to go forward in obedience, trusting Him and His power to deliver them? Exodus 14:15-16.

COMMENT: God likewise tells twentieth century Christians to go forward in obedience to Him, trusting Him and His power—the Holy Spirit—to deliver them!

7. What external help did the Israelites receive from God to protect them from Pharaoh and his army? Exodus 14:19-20.

COMMENT: The angel of the Lord in the cloud had gone before the Israelites to show them the way. Now he went behind them, between them and their enemies, to protect them. We need external help today, too—and very desperately! What we need is God and His Holy Spirit to help us keep ourselves from falling into the clutches of future sins, once our past sins have been forgiven and covered by Christ's blood.

8. When God divided the Red Sea so that the children of Israel could pass through (Exodus 14:21-22), were they fearful? Psalms 78:53.Did they trust God to keep the walls of water from

crashing down upon them? Hebrews 11:29.

9. What happened to the Egyptians who pursued the Israelites? Exodus 14:26-28.

COMMENT: Here we see Pharaoh and his army, who represented the sins of Egypt in which Israel had lived, buried in a watery grave. How wonderfully this typifies the symbolism of Christian baptism!--"We know that our old self [our old sinful, carnal self] was crucified [killed and buried by baptism, verses 3-5] with Him [Christ], so that the sinful body might be [symbolically] destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:6,RSV).

10. Therefore, isn't Israel's deliverance from Egypt (sin) through the waters of the Red Sea clearly referred to as a type of Christian baptism? 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.

COMMENT: God often required many of the Old Testament prophets, including Moses, to act out the things He would bring to pass in the future (see Ezekiel 4:1-17;Ezekiel 5:1-4). Likewise, God requires those who now sincerely want to have their past sins blotted out and covered by Christ's blood to perform the physical, yet deeply symbolic act of baptism! It impresses the MEANING of baptism upon us, and is an outward sign illustrating our deeply sincere repentance and belief in Christ's sacrifice for our sins. And so the passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh and his army in a watery "grave" (symbolizing the destruction of our "old man," or past life of sin), clearly typify New Testament water baptism.

John's Baptism

Just before the coming of Christ, and the subsequent arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, God commissioned the prophet John to administer the "baptism of repentance." Let's understand what it was, and exactly why it was instituted.

1. Was John clearly a prophet of God? Luke 1:63,Luke 1:76; Matthew 11:9-11.

2. For whose ministry was John sent to proclaim and prepare the way? Luke 1:76;Matthew 3:1-3;Matthew 11:10.

3. Did John baptize with water? John 1:26,John 1:31-33. Who sent John and gave him authority to baptize? Luke 3:2-3;Matthew 21:23-27.

COMMENT: John was commissioned by God to baptize the repentant in water. Baptism at that time, as it is today, was an outward sign of inward repentance. And it pictured their being washed and cleansed from past sins. After Christ's sacrifice, baptism took on even greater symbolic meaning (Romans 6:3-6;Colossians 2:12-13), as explained earlier in this lesson.

4. Exactly what was the message John preached? Mark 1:4-5;Matthew 3:11.What was the specific purpose for his message? Luke 1:77.

COMMENT: John's inspired message was the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." It was exactly what it implied. Those John baptized had responded to his preaching by repenting of their past sins. They were actually forgiven by God as were the righteous men and women of Old Testament times. But those John baptized did not yet receive the Holy Spirit because it was not made available until after Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven (John 7:38-39). The account in Luke 1:77 clearly states that John the Baptist was sent "To give knowledge of salvation

unto His people by the remission of their sins." John was simply preaching repentance from sin. His message was preparing a people to receive and obey Christ when He came on the scene, thus preparing the way for His coming. A New Testament Command

Now that this foundation of understanding has been laid, let’s learn exactly what Jesus Christ commands us today concerning water baptism.

1. Did Jesus set an example for us in all things to show us that we should walk—live—as He did? 1 Peter 2:21;1 John 2:6.Was He baptized? Matthew 3:13-16.

COMMENT: Even though Jesus had no sins to repent of, He was baptized, setting an example for us to follow.

2. After His resurrection, Jesus told His twelve apostles (who formed the foundation of His one and only Church from that time to this very day) what they were to preach to the world. Did He plainly command them to baptize repentant believers? Matthew 28:19-20;Mark 16:15-16.What, exactly, were the repentant to "believe"? Mark 1:14-15;Acts 8:12.

COMMENT: The true "gospel" or good news Christ commanded His Church to preach is not solely a message about His being our Savior—it is the very message He brought and preached—the good news of the coming Kingdom and Government of God.

One must also hear and believe the true gospel before being baptized. Christ’s gospel includes not only believing on Him as our personal Savior, but also as our coming King. Those who believe the true gospel, accept Christ and believe He is their Savior, repent of their sins and are baptized, and live a life of overcoming, are the ones who will be saved— born again at the resurrection to inherit the Kingdom of God!

3. What was Peter’s command to the believers on the Day of Pentecost? Acts 2:38.

4. Do we find that repentant believers were always baptized? Acts 2:41;Acts 8:5,Acts 8:12.

5. About ten years after the Apostle Peter preached his first inspired sermon to the Jewish people in Jerusalem, God sent him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He was sent to the house of Cornelius, a very devout Italian (Acts 10:1-48). Peter then proceeded to preach the entire gospel to Cornelius and his family (Acts 10:33-43).

What did Cornelius and family receive even as they were hearing Peter’s message—before being baptized? Acts 10:44-45. Was this a special sign from God to the apostles? Acts 11:17-18.

COMMENT: God made an exception in this instance. Repentant believers ordinarily must be baptized first before they can receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). But since Cornelius and his family were the first Gentiles to be called of God and converted, God gave them the Holy Spirit before baptism as a special sign to prove to Peter and the other apostles that He had indeed also opened the way of salvation to Gentiles.

6. What did Peter then immediately command should be done with Cornelius and his family? Acts 10:47-48.

COMMENT: Peter, following Christ's instructions (Matthew 28:19-20), had Cornelius and other repentant believers in his family baptized! Obviously baptism is very important to God— else He would not have made it an absolute command to be obeyed by all who would become true Christians. The Correct Method The religious world today is in great confusion regarding methods of baptism. Some "baptize" by sprinkling, and others by pouring water over the heads of new converts. Some don't baptize at all. What is the correct method of baptism—or are they all correct?

It is interesting to note that the word "sprinkle" occurs only a few times in the New Testament, and always in connection with the blood of Christ—but never referring to baptism. The word "pouring" is also mentioned several times in the New Testament—but not once as a form of baptism!

Notice what the New Catholic Encyclopedia says regarding baptism: "It is evident that baptism in the early church was by immersion. This is implicit in the terminology and context.... That Baptism took place by immersion is evidenced by Paul's presenting it as "being buried with Christ [Romans 6:3-4;Colossians 2:12]" (pages 56, 58). The older version of the Catholic Encyclopedia tells us that "The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion...in the Latin Church immersion seems to have prevailed until the twelfth century" (article, "Baptism"). In the year 1155, Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Baptism may be given not only by immersion, but also by effusion of water, or sprinkling with it. But it is the safer way to baptize by immersion, because that is the most common custom" (quoted by Wall, History of Infant Baptism, Vol II, pp. 391-393, emphasis ours).

Also Brenner—after a full investigation of the administration of baptism through the centuries—wrote: "Thirteen hundred years was baptism generally and regularly an immersion by the person under the water, and only in extraordinary cases, a sprinkling or pouring with water; the latter [sprinkling or pouring] moreover, was disputed—nay even forbidden" (Brenner, Catholic History, p. 306). But pouring and sprinkling were beginning to grow common in the 14th century, gradually prevailing in the Western Church. It is quite plain that they were late innovations of men which had become the custom in the Catholic Church. The word "baptize" is not an English word per se. It is a Greek word. And the New Testament was written in the Greek language. In translating the Bible into English, the translators left this word untranslated. Literally, in the Greek, the word is baptizo. The definition is "immerse." It means to "plunge into" or "put into." It does not mean "to sprinkle" or "to pour." The Greek word for "sprinkle" is rantizo and "to pour" is cheo. The Holy Spirit inspired only the use of the word baptizo, meaning to immerse, when referring to baptism.

Therefore, sprinkling or pouring are not forms of baptism. Immersion— being placed completely down under water—is. Baptism symbolizes the burial of the old carnal, sinful self. Only total immersion can properly symbolize death and burial; sprinkling or pouring are not symbols of a burial by any stretch of the imagination!

Let's notice what the Bible itself teaches concerning the proper mode or method of baptism.

1. Why was John baptizing in Aenon near Jerusalem? John 3:23.

COMMENT: John would have needed only a cupful of water to sprinkle, or a pitcher full to pour—but baptizing requires "much water."

2. How does the baptism of Christ prove that He was immersed? Matthew 3:16.

COMMENT: Jesus had to be put down into the water, for He "went up straight way out of the water...." It is ridiculous to think He could have come "up...out" of a sprinkle or a pour!

3. When Philip baptized the eunuch, did they both go into the water? Acts 8:38.

COMMENT: There was no purpose whatever for Philip to actually go into the water, except for the reason there was no other way he could plunge the eunuch into the river. Had sprinkling or pouring been the proper method of baptism, Philip would have needed only to bend over and scoop up the water in his hands. The above biblical evidence clearly shows that immersion—being placed completely under water—was the only method of baptism practiced by the original Holy Spirit-inspired Church of God.

Other Kinds of Immersion!

Water baptism is an outward sign of inward repentance. It demonstrates to God one's willingness to put away permanently his or her old way of life and walk in His new way of life. Its meaning is strictly symbolic in the sense that water baptism itself has no mystical or magic effects on the person who is immersed. Its only physical effect is to get the person thoroughly wet! Nor is the Holy Spirit given by water baptism.

Surprisingly, there are several other distinct "baptisms" or immersions mentioned in the Bible. Let's understand what they are:

1. Did John the Baptist speak of another Christian baptism? Matthew 3:11.

COMMENT: John had just been warning the hypocritical religionists to demonstrate some fruits, or results of their alleged repentance (Matthew 3:5-8). Notice again what he said: "I baptize [immerse] you with water for repentance, but he [Jesus] who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize [immerse] you with the Holy Spirit and [immerse you] with fire" (Matthew 3:11, RSV). Here John referred to two other kinds of immersion—neither of them in water. First let's understand the "baptism of the Holy Spirit."

2. Did Jesus promise His disciples the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit? Acts 1:4-5.When did the Holy Spirits finally come? Acts 2:1-4.

COMMENT: On that day of Pentecost, fifty days after Christ's resurrection, Jesus' promise and prophecy of John the Baptist were fulfilled. God began His spiritual Church on earth then by putting the Holy Spirit within His disciples.

3. Is God's Church actually the "body" of Christ? 1 Corinthians 12:12-14,1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18.

4. How do we become members of that body—the true Church? Can we join it? Or must we be put "into" it by God's Spirit? 1 Corinthians 12:13.

COMMENT: Notice that this scripture does not say we are baptized in the Holy Spirit—but by it! The receiving of the Holy Spirit in our minds as a spiritual begettal actually puts us into the spiritual body of Christ which is His Church! So just being physically baptized in water does not put you into God's Spirit-led church. You must be put into the Church by the Spirit of God. In Romans 8:9,Paul tells us plainly that unless the Spirit of Christ dwells within us, we do not belong to Him. We

become Christ’s, then, when His Spirit comes into us.

Each member of Christ’s "body" (1 Corinthians 12:27)--His Church—is joined to the other by the common bond of God’s Holy Spirit residing in them. So when we become Christ’s by receiving His Spirit, we are then put "into" His body—the Church of God—by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures plainly show that it is the receiving of the Holy Spirit which automatically plunges us—immerses, "baptizes," or puts us—"into" the Church of God. This immersion into the Church by the Holy Spirit is termed by the Scriptures, "the baptism with," "the baptism by," or "the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

5. Another "baptism" referred to in the Scriptures and directly connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is mentioned in Matthew 28:19.Exactly what does this verse say?

COMMENT: The key expression in Matthew 28:19 is the phrase "in the name of." In Greek it is eis to onoma, an expression nowhere else used in the New Testament. Contemporary literature in Greek from that time period has been found with this expression and shows its full meaning: "The phrase...is frequent in the papyri with reference to payments made to the account of any one’ .... The usage is of interest in connection with Matthew 28:19,where the meaning would seem to be ‘baptized into the possession of the Father, etc.’" (J. Moulton and G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, p. 451).

We learned in lesson 8 that our receiving of the Holy Spirit following baptism begets us as the literal "sons of God" (Romans 8:14;1 John 3:1), finally to become His born again sons at the resurrection.

Matthew 28:19 simply means that when we receive the Spirit of God, we automatically, through this miraculous begettal, become unborn children in the divine family called "God." This becomes our "baptism" or immersion into both the family and power of God or into sonship, brotherhood (with Christ) and their inherent blessings. This is in addition to our immersion into the spiritual "body of Christ," both occurring at the same time. At present, the literal spiritual Family of God consists only of the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the divine nature and power of the God Family—not a "third person" as some have assumed. (Much more about the Holy Spirit will be covered in the following lesson.)

6. But what about the "baptism with fire"? Should a Christian seek it? Turn back to Matthew the third chapter. Exactly what did John the Baptist prophesy concerning "baptism with fire"? Matthew 3:11.

COMMENT: The whole population came in great crowds to see John—mostly out of curiosity. But John was speaking in particular to the unrepentant, hypocritical religionists, as well as those who did repent. Notice carefully that some of those to whom John spoke—the repentant—were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit later. But the others present—among them many hypocritical, unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees—were going to be baptized with fire—immersed in Gehenna fire—unless they repented. They would be burned up as chaff (Matthew 3:12). This fire, as we learned in a previous lesson, is the ultimate fate of all the incorrigible wicked (Revelation 21:8;Malachi 4:1-3).

One other important point: the baptism of fire is not associated, as some say, with the "cloven tongues like as [flames] of fire" which sat upon each of the disciples (Acts 2:3). This was a special

sign of the first outpouring and receipt of the Holy Spirit that was given only at the very beginning of the New Testament Church. Speaking in "other tongues" (intelligible foreign languages) was another sign and was utilized that day in communicating with people from many nations of different languages who had come to observe the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1, Acts 2:5-12).

Baptized By Christ's Authority Should a person be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ"? Exactly what does this phrase mean? Let's notice the simple biblical explanation.

1. Did Jesus baptize more disciples than John? John 3:22;John 4:1.But did He actually perform the baptisms Himself? John 4:2.Then who did the baptizing? Same verse.

COMMENT: Jesus did not actually do the physical work of baptizing these people. He had His disciples do it for Him—in His stead.

2. Did the apostles baptize repentant believers in Christ's name? Acts 2:37-38,Acts 2:41.

COMMENT: The inspired Greek expression for "in the name of" means "by the authority of." If you do anything in the name of another, you do it with or by that person's authority—by his express permission.

Jesus' disciples did the baptizing "in Jesus' name"—that is, in His stead, for Him, by His authority—and that was considered just the same as if Jesus had actually done it Himself.

3. Are God's ministers today commanded to do all things in the name of Christ? Colossians 3:17.

COMMENT: Baptism, when performed by ministers of God's Church, is therefore always done "in the name of Jesus Christ"—that is, by His divine authority. The "Laying On of Hands"

1. Why did Peter and John lay their hands on repentant persons in Samaria following their baptism in water? Acts 8:14-17.Also notice Acts 8:18-23.

COMMENT: Note that even though the people had been previously baptized in water, they did not yet have the Holy Spirit. This plainly shows that the Holy Spirit is not given immediately at or by water baptism—and yet Acts 2:38 shows that baptism does precede the giving of the Holy Spirit. The "laying on of hands" (Hebrews 6:2)is the key that solves this apparent enigma. The Holy Spirit is given to a person by prayer and the laying on of hands of God's ministry following baptism. Notice the sequence: first repentance; then water baptism; next the laying on of hands; then the receipt of the Holy Spirit as a result of the laying on of hands. And as we just learned, the receiving of God's Spirit "immerses" or "plunges" the person into the Church (the spiritual body of Christ) and into the divine Family of God.

Salvation Without Baptism?

Since water baptism is commanded by God for salvation, what about the thief on the cross? Was he saved without being baptized? What about those utterly unable to be baptized?

1. Does baptism itself save us? Romans 5:10.

COMMENT: Baptism in water is not what saves us, although it is a commanded step in God's Plan of salvation. As explained before, it is merely symbolic of that which remits our sins—the death of Christ. It also pictures His resurrection, by which we are finally saved.

2. What did the thief on the cross ask Christ? Luke 23:42.What was Jesus' reply? Luke 23:43.

COMMENT: Some have assumed from this verse that Jesus promised the thief that he would be with Him in paradise that very day. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Consider the context of this verse. Remember the thief had asked: "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). The plain fact, as we learned from our previous studies of the Bible, is that Jesus has not yet come into His Kingdom.

Grammatically, Luke 23:43 is ambiguous. Early Greek manuscripts did not contain punctuation. It would have been possible to show the proper phraseology by the use of the Greek word for "that" (hoti); however, Luke did not insert the relative pronoun, and the word "today" could be taken either with the first part of the sentence ("Truly, I say to you today") or with the last part ("today you will be with me in Paradise"). Either one is grammatically possible.

Many early translators and commentators do not clearly show how they understood the Greek expression. Some of them (such as the Vulgate) are just as ambiguous as the original. A number of early translations and commentators do place the "today" with the last part. On the other hand, there is also early support for the other rendering. For example, the Old Syriac translation (often dated about 200 AD) clearly says, "I say to you today." Some manuscripts of the Coptic translation also have this reading, as do the Greek patristic writers Hesychius and Theophilus. An early apocryphal work, the Acts of Pilate, also connects "today" with "I say to you."

Thus, even though either reading is possible grammatically, and even though many translators and exegetes read "today" as the time of being in Paradise rather than as the time of Jesus' speaking, many other scriptures show without equivocation that the thief would not be with Jesus in Paradise that day. Where was Jesus himself that day? In the grave! (1 Corinthians 15:3-4;Mark 15:44-46.) This was hardly Paradise. So the other alternative is the only one which fits with the rest of the Bible! The thief obviously was unable to be baptized. Since baptism is not the thing which saves us, or gives us eternal life, he did not lose his chance for salvation because of circumstances beyond his control. God makes allowances for such extremely rare cases. But God commands water baptism for all who are able. If a person deliberately ignores, rejects, defies or refuses this biblical command, this would be an act of disobedience to God; and unless repented of, would undoubtedly cause loss of salvation.

We need not worry about the thief on the cross, or anyone utterly unable to be baptized. We do not need to be very much concerned, however, about obeying God's plain command when we are able.

How Long Should You Wait?

Many put off baptism. They feel they are too infirm, too old, too weak- or they feel they are "not ready" yet spiritually. Some even think they must be perfect before being baptized. But how could a person be "perfect" before he receives God's Holy Spirit, which helps us to become perfect?

Then there are those who hesitate to request baptism because they do not feel they "know enough." This fear is usually unfounded.

Sincere, heartfelt repentance and belief are the only prior conditions for baptism given in the Bible! It is not necessary to know all the books of the Bible in their order, the acrostic psalms, the background of the minor prophets, and have a complete understanding of the political situation in the cities Paul traveled!

It should be obvious that the 3,000 people who were baptized on that day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-47 were not all Bible scholars. They undoubtedly, for the most part, knew only the basics—the "milk" of the Word—and perhaps not even that much. But they readily accepted the Word of God (Acts 2:41); they were not in doubt; they were sincerely and deeply repentant (Acts 2:37).

One simply cannot expect to "know it all" when he is baptized. It is a matter of a lifetime of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ after one is baptized. (Anyone who has progressed this far in this course of Bible study already possesses much knowledge!) The truth is, none of these excuses is acceptable in God’s sight. If a person knows that God commands baptism, knows that he should be baptized, and his conscience convicts him—then he should be baptized as soon as possible. Notice now several examples from the Bible:

1. When the Ethiopian eunuch came to understand Christ was his Savior, did he hesitate about being baptized? Did he put it off? Acts 8:35-38.

2. When Paul was first converted, and learned that Christ is the Son of God whom he had been persecuting, did he procrastinate about being baptized? Acts 9:1-18,especially Acts 9:18.

COMMENT: Neither of these men put off water baptism. They saw their own personal need. They knew they needed Christ as their Savior and desperately wanted their sins blotted out by His shed blood. They felt dirty and despicable before God, as long as they stood before Him in their sins. They knew they were the slaves of sin, and did not have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Therefore, as soon as was possible, they were baptized.

Old age makes no difference with God. Circumstances make no difference. There simply is no acceptable excuse for not being baptized when a person understands this vital, urgent spiritual truth and is physically able to obey it.

How Old Should You Be?

Baptism should be done as the result of complete and total repentance toward God and complete faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Only a mature mind, one which can truly "count the cost" (Luke 14:28-30), should consider baptism. Generally speaking, only mature adults should be baptized.

Even older children have not reached the maturity and stability of judgment where they have the self-discipline to truly repent, and believe. It is only near and at adulthood that the average person is sufficiently mature to comprehend the real significance of baptism. Only then do many seem capable of making a meaningful commitment to Christ. An immature mind may experience an emotional feeling of temporary remorse. This may often be falsely construed as repentance, when it is only momentary, and soon forgotten. It is much like "puppy love." How many teenagers, 13 to 18, have a number of temporary emotional experiences of feeling sure they are "in love" and cannot be talked out of it?

They usually grow out of it, but in rare cases, of course, they may really "know their minds"—though this is the rare exception, and not the rule. So it is with repentance and belief.

Experience shows that many who are baptized prematurely abandon their baptismal commitment at a later time. Of course this is not always the case. A number of fine young people have been baptized and have been remarkably faithful to their calling as Christians.

Some present the argument that the infants and older children of Cornelius's household were baptized (Acts 10:1-48). This is merely an argument from silence. The Scriptures nowhere indicate whether or not Cornelius's "household" included any children under adult age.

Those baptized in Cornelius's house must have been mature enough to understand the prior conditions of salvation and able to truly repent and believe. It is highly unlikely that young children in the household would have been baptized. The same explanation applies to the baptism of the Philippian jailer's "household" (Acts 16:31-33).

Jesus set us the example of what we should do regarding infants and young children. But it did not include baptism! There is no record of Jesus ever having commanded baptism for children, nor is there any biblical record of the early New Testament Church having performed such baptisms. Nowhere in the Bible is there an example or command for this common practice of our day. The Bible shows Jesus merely laid His hands upon and pronounced blessings on little children (Matthew 19:13;Mark 10:13-16). Today, the ministers of Christ's Church follow His example by invoking similar blessings upon the little children of its membership.

Re-baptism in the New Testament Have you already been baptized? If so, was it done the way God commands? Had you really repented? Did you know what repentance is? Did you come to feel deeply broken up over your past way of life which was contrary to God's way as it is revealed in the Bible? Did you come to thoroughly abhor your past way of life so that you simply couldn't stand to live with yourself any longer? Did you not only feel this as a deep and very real emotion, but did you thoroughly understand that you are to strive to obey the living God and His law from that day forward? Had you really come to Jesus Christ in unconditional surrender of your rebellion against God's ways? Had you really repented of living by the standards of this world? Did you really "count the cost" before baptism? Did you understand, fully, that you were being buried, and that a "new you" was to emerge from the water? In this regard, there is a question that many students of this course have considered well worth asking. Many of our students have made a previous decision or commitment to what they then believed to be the truth of God. Some may have even been baptized or had a "religious experience" of some kind. Now, through this correspondence course, the magazines, booklets, and other literature published by the Worldwide Church of God, they have come to learn a great deal more about many biblical subjects- such as, for example, repentance, baptism and the Holy Spirit. So the puzzling question often arises: "What should I do? Should I be re-baptized?" The New Testament itself answers that question: Remember the example of Apollos, during the early days of the first century church? (Be sure to read Acts 18:24 But when the Apostle Paul came to question the people who had been taught and instructed by Apollos, he found that there was a key ingredient missing in their lives—the Holy Spirit of God. Paul not only found that these people hadn't received God's Spirit, but they didn't even know what it was. And, as can well be understood, there is a surprising number of our students today who shared a similar lack of basic knowledge absolutely vital to salvation before

studying with this course.

Apollos himself needed further instruction. He received it from a dedicated couple in the Church of God named Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24Acts 19:6.) But when the Apostle Paul came to question the people who had been taught and instructed by Apollos, he found that there was a key ingredient missing in their lives—the Holy Spirit of God. Paul not only found that these people hadn’t received God’s Spirit, but they didn’t even know what it was. And, as can well be understood, there is a surprising number of our students today who shared a similar lack of basic knowledge absolutely vital to salvation before studying with this course.

Apollos himself needed further instruction. He received it from a dedicated couple in the Church of God named Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26). He was an enthusiastic and eloquent speaker whose zeal at first exceeded his understanding. He repeated certain things he had heard concerning Jesus Christ and John the Baptist and about the message they preached. He convinced many of that same message who were then baptized as a result of hearing it. And, of course, those individuals to whom Apollos preached needed further instruction, which they received from Paul, after which they were all immediately re-baptized.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, you may need to consider re-baptism. No matter what your previous religious history has been, don’t worry about it. Start afresh! Become a "new you." Don’t delay in receiving and putting the power of God’s Holy Spirit to work in your life. Then you will be able to look forward to the day when this same Holy Spirit will transform you into a Spirit Being—a powerful and glorious, eternal member of the divine Family of God! (Romans 8:11-23.) Where to Get Help For those of you who have come to the place where you want the precious blood of Jesus Christ to blot out your past sins—who desire to crucify the "old man" in the waters of baptism, desperately wanting God’s forgiveness- who really want to obey God unconditionally—there are ministers of the Church of God who reside in many cities in the United States, the British Commonwealth and other parts of the world. They are available, if invited, to answer your questions about spiritual matters, to advise and counsel with you about baptism, and to help you in any way they can. They won’t try to pressure you into anything. But they will assist as only the called and chosen ministers of Christ can do.

Remember, you have a most merciful and compassionate heavenly Father. He is literally filled with the spirit of forgiveness (Psalms 86:5).He is eager and anxious to forgive any and everyone who repents.

God’s ministers, though not perfect, mirror a portion of God’s very character in this very important respect. The ministers of God’s Church are warm, friendly, and concerned. They do not condone sin; but they won’t condemn the sinner either.

Please feel free to write us and request to be visited in your own home by one of these men. Use the enclosed card to make your request, then mail it in the attached envelope to our office nearest you. (See page 2 for the addresses if you reside outside the United States.)

Perhaps there are some of you who are wondering about an earlier baptism. Others of you, having never been baptized, have come to realize the absolute necessity of baptism as a required step toward salvation. Regardless of your category, please feel free to call upon us to help you.

All of us in this worldwide Work of God want only to serve. We count it a privilege to be able to provide this service to our students, and it’s free and without any personal obligation. In the Meantime... Remember, God wants us all to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). One way to grow is by a careful study of the inspired Word of God.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Use your time. Take time to study the Bible even if you are busy and have many responsibilities. Review this and previous lessons in detail. Study and think about the down-to-earth, solid, specific points on Christian living which God outlines in His Word. Be sure you thoroughly comprehend the depths of real repentance.

If you haven’t already read our booklets, What Do You Mean...Salvation? and All About Water Baptism, be sure to send for them. Use the enclosed coupon and mail it to us in the attached envelope.

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished the test, check your choices with the correct answers at the end of this lesson, and then rate yourself.

1. The Greek word baptizo, from which the English word "baptize" is derived, means A. to sprinkle. B. to pour. C. both to sprinkle, and to pour. D. to immerse, plunge into, or put into.

2. Sprinkling and pouring are A. forms of baptism which are just as acceptable to God as complete immersion in water. B. incorrect methods of baptism which were introduced by men. C. words mentioned in the Bible, therefore they are valid forms of baptism. D. the methods of baptism practiced by the true Church of God today.

3. Jesus was baptized A. by pouring. B. by sprinkling. C. because He was a repentant sinner. D. by total immersion in water as an example for us to follow.

4. Water baptism A. is an outward sign of one’s repentance and submission to God. B. does not represent the burial of the old sinful self. C. is a form of initiation into a church. D. is the means by which our sins are forgiven.

5. What must the repentant believe before baptism? A. That Christ is their Savior—that’s all. B. Christ’s "gospel," which includes not only believing on Him as our personal Savior, but also as the King Of the coming Kingdom of God. C. That Jesus did away with His Father’s law. D. That Jesus obeyed the law in our stead.

6. Which "baptism" should a person not seek? A. Baptism in water. B. Baptism by fire. C. Baptism of the Holy Spirit. D. Baptism "into" the Family of God.

7. The Holy Spirit A. is given immediately upon baptism. B. is given before baptism. C. is given long after baptism. D. is given through the "laying on of hands" of God’s minister immediately following baptism.

8. Which one of the following is not true? A. Baptism pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. B. Baptism also pictures the death and burial of our old sinful life. C. Coming up out of the waters of baptism is symbolic of beginning a new life of obedience to God. D. Baptism merely

pictures the symbolic death of our past sinful life—that’s all.

9. How soon must repentant believers be baptized? A. We can’t be sure since there are no examples given in the Bible. B. They can delay baptism as long as they wish. C. As soon as possible. D. They must be baptized within 24 hours after repentance.

10. Should a person ever consider re-baptism? A. Never—not under any circumstances! B. Yes, especially if he thoroughly understood exactly what God required of him before his previous baptism. C. Not having received the Holy Spirit would not be a reason to be re-baptized. D. Definitely—especially if he now realizes he knew little or nothing about the purpose of what he was doing at the time of his previous baptism.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. The receiving of the Holy Spirit "immerses" one into—puts one into- the true "body," or church, of God. T F 12. Jesus’ example was to bless children, not baptize them. T F 13. One must be very well grounded in the knowledge of the Bible before he can be baptized. T F

14. Sincere, heartfelt repentance and belief in Christ’s gospel are not the only prior conditions for baptism given in the Bible. T F 15. God commands baptism for all who are able to be baptized. T F Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand column to the correctly related phrase in the right-hand column.

16. The Flood

A. Baptism commanded

B. Any church

17. Pharaoh

C. Tragic destruction

D. Holy Spirit

18. John’s bapism

E. Foreshadowed baptism

F. Christ’s corpse

19. Body of Christ

G. Passover lamb

H. Satan and sin

20. Acts 2:38

I. God’s true church

J. Emphasized repentance

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-D 5-B 9-C 13-F 17-H 19-20 correct excellent 2-B 6-B 10-D 14-F 18-J 16-18 correct good 3-D 7-D 11-T 15-T 19-I 13-15 correct fair 4-A 8-D 12-T 16-E 20-A

Lesson 11 Part 1

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 11 - Part 1 Why You Need The Holy Spirit

Mankind is engaged in a frustrating search for answers to the problems of humanity. Yet the real answers have eluded this world's greatest thinkers. Only the Creator God has the ultimate answer—if we are willing to seek and accept it! WHAT is the Holy Spirit? What does it do? Why do we need it anyway? The answers to these questions are vitally important to everyone, for the Holy Spirit is the only real, permanent and lasting answer to the problems of every human being!

Jesus said: "... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). One reason Christ came into this world was to teach humanity the true values in life—the way which would bring true happiness and joy into our lives. But more importantly, Christ came to reveal the way to receive God's gift of eternal life. Jesus taught that unless we receive and retain the Holy Spirit, we can never hope to enter the Kingdom of God. Why?

Because it is only through God's Spirit that we develop the lasting character of God in this life, and are resurrected to glorious eternal life at Christ's return.

Holy Spirit Now Available

Jesus Christ came to herald the coming of the Holy Spirit—to make this precious gift freely available to every person whom God would call and who would truly repent and believe. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said," proclaimed Jesus, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive...)" (John 7:38-39).

After teaching His deciples for three and one half years, Jesus Christ prepared to offer Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. Soon He would be crucified and murdered by His contempraries. After three days and three nights in the tomb, He would be resurrected to sit at the right hand of His Father in heaven. His twelve apostles would then spearhead the Work He had personally begun.

These men would have to face the sobering prospect of carrying an unpopular gospel to a hostile world. They would have to contemplate years of persecution, ridicule and possibly even martyrdom. A discomforting prospect to say the least! The apostles would need strength, encouragement and wisdom. They would need love, patience and endurance to follow in Christ's steps and carry out His commission.

Jesus Promised Special Help The apostles would also need to recall the lessons taught to them by Christ during His earthly ministry. As generally "unlearned" men, they needed wisdom to face the philosophers, scholars and intellectuals of that day. They needed faith and courage to confront the seething hostility of religious leaders who would attempt to stamp out the fledgling Work of God time after time. And Jesus knew it!

He said to them shortly before His trial and crucifixion: "I am not going to leave you alone in the world—I am coming to you" (John 14:18,Phillips trans.). Christ intended to continue to teach and support the twelve, but not in the flesh. His Father in heaven possessed a means by which the apostles would be aided miraculously in their efforts to spread the true gospel.

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit," said Jesus, "whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you" (John 14:26,RSV). The word translated "counselor" in the Greek is parakletos, which in the Gospel of John has the meaning of "helper, advisor, intercessor." God's Spirit was intended to help and support the apostles in their work. And it would remind them of the lessons they had learned from their Master—Jesus Christ. A Help and Comfort to Every Christian But Christ did not limit the help of the Holy Spirit to the apostles alone. Notice the apostle Peter's bold promise in Acts 2:38:"... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (RSV). And as we learned in a previous lesson, only those who possess the Holy Spirit are recognized by God as being true Christians (Romans 8:9-11).

You can have the resources that will enable you to live the kind of life God intended from the beginning, and to ultimately attain eternal life. But these gifts can come only from above—from the Holy Spirit of God—not from the within or the around. The apostle James was inspired to remind us that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights ..." (James 1:17). Our Creator stands ready to impart these wonderful resources through the vehicle of His Holy Spirit—if we will only abide by the conditions outlined in His Word. The Holy Spirit is indeed the key to the spiritual blessings of God. It is the only ingredient which will enable man to fulfill his inner craving for the love, joy and peace he so desperately needs for true happiness and accomplishment in this life, and for all eternity.

Let's begin to understand much more about why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

LESSON 11 What the Holy Spirit Really Is

Spiritual qualities and entities seem so unreal to most people. And no wonder. Spiritual things are invisible, not discerned by the senses except as revealed in writing in the Bible. When we speak of the Holy Spirit, it is difficult to grasp its nature. Yet the Bible reveals a great deal about God's Spirit. In a section of Lesson 8, we proved conclusively from our study of the scriptures that the Holy Spirit is not a "third person" of a limited "trinity." We discovered that the Spirit of God is the power and energy of the God Family, as well as the very nature, life and mind of God.

Let's review some of those essential scriptures, and study a few new ones as we lay the foundation for understanding one of the most crucial subjects of the Bible.

1. What is the composition of God? John 4:24.But do the Father and Christ have definite form and shape? Genesis 1:26;John 14:9;Revelation 1:13-16.

COMMENT: The God Family is composed of divine, immortal spirit essence. Spirit is the very life of God. Yet the Father and the Son have definite shape. From one end of the Bible to the other we are told about the shape and the parts of each member of the God Family. The Father and the Son each have a head, hair, eyes, nose, mouth, arms, fingers, a torso, legs, feet, plus inward parts.

Man, as we know, was created in the image of God. But we are composed of temporal, corruptible matter. We do not have eternal life inherent within ourselves as does the God Family.

2. What is another great difference between God and man—what is God's characteristic attitude and general mental makeup? Psalms 99:9.Is there anyone as "holy" as God? 1 Samuel 2:2.Would you consider man, of himself, as being "holy"? Romans 3:10-18,Romans 3:23;Romans 8:7;Jeremiah 17:9.

COMMENT: The word holy means pure of heart or free from sin. The two beings presently composing the God Family possess a sinless, "holy," spiritual attitude and mind. The Holy Spirit therefore expresses the very mind and character of God.

3. What are some other characteristic attributes of God's Spirit? Isaiah 11:2-3.

4. Does God's Spirit fill the entire universe? Psalms 139:7-8;Jeremiah 23:24.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit, like matter, exists in various states. It not only composes the members of the God Family, it also flows out from them to accomplish their will.

5. Is the Holy Spirit also the power by which God—the ultimate source of all power—created all things? Jeremiah 32:17;Psalms 104:30.How did the Eternal God utilize His Spirit of power to bring His various creations into being? Psalms 148:1-5.Notice the word "commanded" in verse 5. Also read Psalms 33:6-9 and Genesis 1:1-3.

COMMENT: Even though the Father and the Son are described specially as being in definite locations with respect to each other, spirit proceeds from them and, as David said, fills the entire universe—much like air is everywhere present on earth. The Spirit actually is the instrument or vehicle by which the God family creates!

Christ—the Logos, or "Word" (John 1:1)--"spake and it was done." It was by the Spirit of God that the creative energy of the Father and Son was transformed into the physical creation we see around us (Hebrews 11:3). And it was by His Spirit that He reformed the surface of the earth (Genesis 1:1-31).

Man has no such inherent spiritual attribute of creative power. God has purposely limited man's creative abilities to dealing strictly with the physical world around him. And so man has learned to work with and use the physical laws which God set in motion—now to a degree seemingly bordering on the miraculous, but physical nonetheless.

God's original purpose for putting man here on earth was to train him for rulership in the Kingdom of God. The earth is the training ground, so to speak, to prepare mankind for greater responsibilities once born into the universe-ruling Family of God—which will include use of the creative power of God!

6. Is the very creation all around us mute testimony of the miraculous creative power of God? Romans 1:20.(Also read the entire, but short, 26th chapter of Job for more vivid illustrations of God's infinite power. You might also like to read Romans 36:22 through Romans 42:6 to see how great the power of God really is!) 7. Does God sustain, preserve and rule His vast creation? Nehemiah 9:6;Hebrews 1:2-3;Psalms 66:7.

COMMENT: God sits at the controls of the entire universe, so to speak, and He rules and sustains everything by the awesome power of His Holy Spirit! The KEY to Glorious Immortality

Man is mortal, subject to death. We do not possess eternal life and great powers inherently within ourselves. Eternal life and spiritual power are gifts of God—attributes of the Holy Spirit. Let's notice how having the Holy Spirit within us now is the key to receiving glorious immortality at the resurrection.

1. According to the biblical account, what happened to Jesus Christ after having been dead and buried for three days? 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.How did the Father raise Christ from death? Ephesians 1:19-21.(Note that verse 17 tells us it is God the Father and Christ who are being discussed here.)

COMMENT: Clearly, it was by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit that God the Father raised Christ from death to glorious immortality, authority and power.

2. Is there any proof of Christ's resurrection from the dead? 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.

3. Was Christ the first of many who are to be resurrected to eternal life? Acts 26:23;Colossians 1:18;1 Corinthians 15:22-23;Romans 8:29.

4. Does the Father promise true Christians that He will also raise them to immortality—to be partakers of His divine nature and power—as He did Jesus? 1 Corinthians 6:14;1 Corinthians 15:49-53;2 Peter 1:4.(We suggest that you also read 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 together with Galatians 3:29;Galatians 4:7;and Titus 3:7.) How essential is it to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us now in order to receive eternal life at the resurrection? Romans 8:9-11,Romans 8:14-17.

COMMENT: The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God desires to elevate mortal man to the God-plane of existence—to become literal spirit-born members of His spirit-composed Family! It is also evident that only those who presently have (or did have before they died) God's Spirit will be granted the gift of eternal life at Christ's return. These individuals—true Christians—have been begotten by the Spirit of God and are manifesting the "fruit" (Galatians 5:22-23)of the Holy Spirit in their lives. (The "fruit of the Spirit" will be discussed later in this lesson.)

We, if we are begotten of the Father and have the Spirit of Christ, are declared to be "heirs" (future inheritors) of the divine nature—of the very mind of God, and of immortal, incorruptible, perfect, all-powerful God-life!

5. When and how quickly will a spirit-begotten person's change to immortality take place? 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

6. What type of body did Jesus receive at the time of His resurrection? 1 Corinthians 15:44-45.Will those who are changed at the coming resurrection be given the same kind of glorious body Jesus Christ has today? Php 3:20-21;1 John 3:2?

COMMENT: They will then be given a spiritcomposed body like Christ has now. Their natural, mortal bodies will suddenly be changed to bodies of spirit, if they are yet alive at the time of the resurrection. If dead, they will be resurrected from the grave with new, spirit bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

7. Was Jesus, with His spirit-composed body, able to suddenly appear and disappear? Luke 24:36-37,Luke 24:31. Was He able to pass through barriers or walls? John 20:19.Can one composed of spirit transform (or manifest) himself into mortal flesh and bone if necessary? Luke 24:37-39.

COMMENT: When one becomes a spirit being, he will also be able to perform all types of miraculous feats as Christ did. Of course, as spirit-born members of God's Family with the character of God, all will be done according to the will of the Father who will always be in charge over all.

8. Are spiritual bodies capable of traveling through space at tremendous speed? Compare John 20:17-19 with Matthew 28:9.

COMMENT: Notice that Christ traveled to the Father in heaven and returned to earth on the same day!

9. Once a person has been changed into spirit, can he ever die again? Luke 20:35-36.

10. Was Jesus to be "glorified" after His resurrection? John 17:4-5;Hebrews 2:9.How do Christ's and the Father's glorified bodies appear when manifested to human beings? Revelation 1:13-16.(The "Son of Man" mentioned here is the glorified Christ.)

COMMENT: Jesus Christ had a glorious, resplendent, spiritual body that was equal to His Father's before He took the human form. After His resurrection, He was restored to the same power and glory. Even when manifested in a mere shadow of its spiritual glory—so that mortal men might receive some idea of its magnificence—Christ's glorified, powerful spirit body radiates light as bright as the sun!

11. Will God also "glorify" all of His spirit-begotten children at the resurrection by giving them this same great power and glory? Romans 8:17;Colossians 3:4.

12. How did Jesus give His disciples a fleeting glimpse of this future glorified condition? Matthew 17:1-2.What other scripture gives us an idea of the future glorified state of those who shall be born again at the resurrection? Daniel 12:2-3.

COMMENT: The ultimate glory that spirit-begotten children of God are to receive at the resurrection will be so great, it will make them shine as the brilliant stars of the heavens. All this can come about only by having God's Spirit working within us now!

(At this juncture it is recommended that you review the material on pages 12-15 of Lesson 8 regarding spiritual begettal, which we will now summarize in the following section.) Our Spiritual Creation Now Possible! In Lesson 8 we learned the biblical definition of what it means to be "born again." We discovered that true Christians are already—in this life—the spiritual children of God the Father (1 John 3:1-2). But even though considered God's children, they are now only heirs (Romans 8:14-17)--ones who shall, in the future, become inheritors. Why?

Because they are now only begotten children. It is only when they are born of God that they become inheritors of God's Kingdom, having become divine, eternal members of the Family of God.

Before the second phase of man’s creation—our spiritual creation—can begin, God the Father must first beget each of us spiritually. Whenever we become a begotten member of God’s Family, at that moment we receive a portion—a seed or germ—of the Father’s Holy Spirit. "...on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:45). This gift is "poured out" from the Father in heaven and, like physical life-giving sperm, unites with the "human" spirit in each of our minds upon conversion. (Recall that in Lesson 5 we studied the scriptures dealing with the "spirit in man.") Each human mind is like the nucleus of an egg with which the seed of the Holy Spirit unites.

Thus we are impregnated, so to speak, by the "seed" or germ of eternal life (1 Peter 1:3-4,1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18.As we learned in Lesson 8, "born again" in 1 Peter 1:23 should have been correctly rendered "begotten again.") This impregnation is the begettal of the spiritual life of God within our minds, making us literal children of God (though yet unborn), for we are going to be like our heavenly Father when finally born into His Family.

We also learned in Lesson 8 that the portion of the Holy Spirit which a person may receive as a begettal, does more than impart to us the possibility of eternal life. It imparts to us characteristics and attributes of the Almighty, the all-powerful God the Father in heaven, just as the physical sperm of a human father transmits the father’s attributes to his newly conceived offspring. And just as a newly begotten physical embryo must begin to grow in its mother’s womb, we also must begin to grow spiritually after being begotten by God’s Spirit.

If you are truly the kind of Christian described in the Bible, then you are now a begotten child of God. You were impregnated with the spiritual germ or sperm of eternal life so you could begin the process of spiritual growth. But you are not yet born of God—not yet composed of spirit—not yet immortal. And if you are not yet begotten of God—a genuine Christian by Bible definition (Romans 8:9)--then you have not yet even begun this process!

Now let’s look a little further into the matter of spiritual growth, once an individual is begotten by God’s Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Growth

Before a spirit-begotten child of God can be born into the divine Family of God, the Bible shows he must grow spiritually. While still mortal, he is to become more God-like—developing more and more of the very character of Jesus Christ.

Let’s study the scriptures showing how this miraculous change and growth can be accomplished.

1. Must spirit-begotten Christians change their former ways of living which were contrary to God’s law? Romans 12:1-2.What is this changing process producing in true Christians? Ephesians 4:22-24.Be sure to also read Ephesians 4:24-32, and Ephesians 5:1-12.

COMMENT: One’s basic attitude of mind must be changed—converted. This transformation is a tremendous undertaking. It requires a miracle! The receiving and indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the power needed to help renew one’s mind.

2. Therefore, are begotten Christians admonished to grow spiritually? 2 Peter 3:18.Are they to be like humble little children growing up—this time spiritually? 1 Peter 2:1-2;Matthew 18:2-3.

COMMENT: As explained before, once we have repented and received God’s Spirit, divine life has been begotten in our minds. Our spiritual life has begun as a very small "seed" which must then grow. To grow spiritually, we must take in spiritual nourishment. Just as the embryo in a mother’s womb must be nourished with life-giving food through the placenta, so we must be nourished by the Word of God. "... The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Those words are recorded in the Bible—and Jesus said we are to live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). We drink in these life-giving words from the Bible through reading, studying and meditating (thinking) on what we read.

We also absorb spiritual nourishment through personal, intimate, daily contact with God in prayer and through regular Christian fellowship with God’s other begotten children in His Church. (More about this later.) 3. Are we to work toward developing the very character of God? Matthew 5:48.

COMMENT: Since it is impossible for any human being (with the exception of Jesus Christ who became mortal flesh and blood) to achieve absolute spiritual perfection in this life, the obvious intent of Jesus’ statement is that we should strive to become "perfect"—like our Father in heaven.

Only when born again at the resurrection will this process be complete, for then we will actually be perfect as the Father and Christ are now (1 John 3:2,1 John 3:9). But in the meantime, Jesus tells us to strive toward that end, growing toward spiritual perfection while still mortal beings! But what, exactly, is spiritual growth? It is the development of the spiritual character of God! The impregnation of your mind by the Holy Spirit will plant within you the seed of the divine nature of God. It will make possible the development of His character in you. Thus, once spirit-begotten, we are to gradually grow to become more and more like God in the way we think, act and do things.

We develop the very character of God by obeying Him, and by giving of ourselves to others in serving and helping our fellowman. This kind of character is developed in Christians through independent free choice combined with learning, experience, trial and test.

It is interesting to note that years of experience with people of every social level and walk of life have shown that every Christian who is truly growing and developing in spiritual character has his heart completely in the Work of God, which the living Christ has called His servants to do as His instruments. One’s "works," therefore, also include his part in helping to spread the good news of Christ’s true Gospel to all mankind (Matthew 24:14;Matthew 28:19-20).

4. According to the apostle Paul, whom must all spirit-begotten Christians strive to emulate? Ephesians 4:15.What is to be the end result of this growing process? Galatians 4:19;Ephesians 4:13.

5. Will Christ "live" in a spirit-begotten Christian to help him grow spiritually? Colossians 1:27-29;Galatians 2:20;1 John 4:2-4;Hebrews 13:20-21.Exactly how will Christ dwell in us? Php 1:19;Php 2:5;Romans 8:8-10;Titus 3:5-6.

COMMENT: Not only must the words of God flow into our minds through Bible study, but spirit must also flow into our minds. Recall that each spirit-begotten Christian has received the Holy Spirit of God, which united with the "human" spirit that is in everyone’s mind. That is what begets us. But that new spiritual life must grow spiritually, much like the fetus in a mother’s womb—until it is finally born.

Added to the germ of spiritual life which proceeds from the Father there must be a continual supply of Spirit sent from Jesus Christ (Php 1:19)so that our minds can grow spiritually. Only in this way can our minds become more and more spiritual, growing toward the maturity of the spiritual character of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Word personified—Christ is the Bible in action. If we have the "mind of Christ"—if Jesus Christ, so to speak, lives His life in us by means of the Holy Spirit—we have at hand the power to grow spiritually as we yield to His Spirit. We have the capacity to grow toward perfect, God-like character.

Let’s draw another analogy to further understand. The Spirit we may receive can be compared to a current of electricity flowing through a light bulb. We are that bulb. But there could be no light without a filament inside of the bulb. The filament is comparable to the spiritual seed from the Father. The Spirit from Christ can be compared to the electricity flowing through the filament. And so as we receive more Spirit from Christ, we emit more "spiritual light"! The expression "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18)does not mean to be filled with emotional manifestations which come from the flesh and not from God’s Spirit. It means that we are imbued with the Spirit of God which is administered through Jesus Christ in His office as High Priest.

Notice again how Paul explained this when he addressed spirit-begotten Christians in the Church at Rome: "But ye are not in the flesh"—not motivated by fleshly passions—"but in the Spirit"—motivated and guided by the Holy Spirit—"if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you"—that is, the Holy Spirit from God the Father transmitting His characteristics. But notice what Paul adds: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). He does not belong to Christ—he is not a true Christian!

Paul was talking about the Holy Spirit from God the Father which begets us as children of God,and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which fills our minds so we can grow spiritually, and be able to resist sin by giving us the strength to overcome the attitude of the devil which leads us to sin. This begettal and growth through the Holy Spirit has unfortunately never been understood by most people.

Great Spiritual Benefits Now

We’ve already seen that many marvelous blessings are made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But there are yet other great benefits available through the Spirit of God.

1. Just how many things does God make available to spirit-begotten Christians through His divine power? 2 Peter 1:3.

2. Can the human mind—having only the "human" spirit which imparts only human understanding—understand the spiritual things of God? 1 Corinthians 2:9,1 Corinthians 2:14. What must be added before a person can comprehend spiritually revealed knowledge? 1 Corinthians 2:10-13.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit gives you the capacity to understand and grasp spiritual concepts and principles—the very truth of God! In John 6:63 Christ revealed that His words are spiritual in nature: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit...." God also revealed in Romans 7:14 that His law is spiritual. Therefore we see that the Bible and the laws and principles it contains are spiritual in makeup. And spiritual things cannot be comprehended by one who does not possess

the Spirit of God. This is not to say the Bible cannot be understood in an academic sense. Many are thoroughly familiar with what it says—some can even recite large portions of God's Word from memory. But God inspired Paul to say that spiritual things are beyond the comprehension of human intellect alone!

Spiritual things simply cannot be seen with the eye, heard with the ear, felt with the hands. The human mind, which can receive knowledge only through these physical channels, can never really comprehend spiritual concepts and principles without the aid of God's Holy Spirit. The greatest scientific and philosophical minds simply cannot really come to know and understand spiritual truths with their natural minds.

Just as surely as no animal brain—such as that of a cow, for example— can comprehend or understand human affairs, so no human mind can have comprehension of spiritual things on the divine plane unless and until it has received the Holy Spirit of God!

Without the Holy Spirit a person cannot really understand the Bible. And so the average individual is hostile and unreceptive to the truth of God and looks upon those who understand and practice it as peculiar! As Paul said, spiritual things are "foolishness" to the unconverted (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Before their conversion, God's begotten children did not understand the Bible and God's way of life. But then God began to draw them (John 6:44)to Christ by His Spirit—He began to grant certain spiritual understanding. They were led to understand the depths of true repentance. After baptism and the receipt of the Spirit of begettal from the Father and the Spirit of Christ, they began to truly keep the laws of God and to comprehend and understand their greatness. And the more they yielded to God and His law, the greater became their spiritual understanding. Notice what God inspired David to write in this regard: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that DO his commandments..." (Psalms 111:10).

3. Is the "carnal" (fleshly) mind with which we were all born therefore unable to comprehend the true spiritual intent of God's law, and therefore unable to obey it—unable to really love God and man? Romans 8:7-8;Jeremiah 17:9;Galatians 5:19-21.

4. But what are the capabilities of a spiritually motivated mind? Romans 8:6;Galatians 5:22-23.Will the Holy Spirit in us grant us the strength to do good works—to literally obey God? Php 2:13;Hebrews 13:20-21.

COMMENT: It is important to understand that the Holy Spirit will not possess you as does a demonic spirit being of the devil's kingdom possess a person. And God's Spirit in you will not force you to live righteously. But it will strengthen you spiritually, and even physically when necessary, to do God's will as you exert your will and determination to follow God's Spirit as it leads you to see and understand God's way.

5. Do begotten children of God also have direct access to the Father and Christ in heaven? Ephesians 2:13-14,Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 10:19-20;Hebrews 4:14-16.What are the special advantages of this close relationship? Matthew 21:22;Hebrews 4:16.Why may we receive what we ask? 1 John 3:22-24;1 John 5:14.

COMMENT: A Christian may come boldly to the Father and Christ the Son in prayer to request help in whatever form necessary, and can expect to receive it according to God's will, if he is

striving to please God in the way he conducts his life.

Divine guidance, intervention, wisdom, understanding, inspiration, as well as protection, legitimate needs, and power to do God's will—all these and more are available through contact with God as made possible by His Spirit.

6. In what other way does the Holy Spirit help a Christian? Romans 8:26-27.

7. Does God also grant His human instruments the spiritual power needed to conduct His Work on earth? Acts 1:8;Matthew 28:18-20.

COMMENT: The gift of the Holy Spirit provides the power by which to carry out Christ's great commission of preaching the Gospel to the world. That power is active and working dynamically in the collective body of Christians God has called to do His end-time Work today!

Lesson 11 Part 2

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 11 - Part 2 Why You Need The Holy Spirit The "Fruit of the Spirit"

Recall that the presence of God's Spirit in one's mind, or the lack thereof, is the sole factor in determining whether or not an individual is really a Christian (Romans 8:9). Therefore, it is imperative that we understand just how the Holy Spirit is to be manifested in a Christian's life.

1. Did Jesus Christ clearly indicate that a person is known by his "fruits," or works? Matthew 7:20.In what way did He characterize Himself, His Father, and their followers? John 15:1-8.Does God expect Christians to bear only a little fruit? John 15:5, John 15:8.

COMMENT: This is the reason Christ calls and chooses His disciples—to bear fruit! "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." (John 15:16).

Jesus was not talking about a momentary sensual thrill or experience— coupled with a "testimony"—that proves you are one of His. You must be led by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's (Romans 8:14), and bear spiritual fruit! But what will God's Spirit lead and guide you to do? What spiritual "fruit," or results, does the Holy Spirit produce in one who is striving to do the will of God?

Fruit is classified as the edible, usable portion of a plant or vine. Christ is the "vine," and we—if we are His begotten children—are the "branches." Our fruit is what we produce as Christians that is usable to Jesus Christ.

Now the good we produce comes from the vine—from Christ! Let's understand. A vine produces grapes, not thorns. An apple tree produces apples, not thistles. The vine determines what fruit should be borne. By this simple analogy we see that it is Christ who determines what kind of fruit we should bear as Christians. That fruit is a result of having the mind of Christ at work in us as made possible by the Spirit of God.

2. How did the apostle Paul, who was inspired of Christ, outline the fruit which the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian? Galatians 5:22-23.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit imparts to you the traits of God's character. If we lack these characteristics in our lives, then we are likely to be producing many of the opposite fruits called the "works of the flesh." These undesirable works are described in Galatians 5:19-21.They include strife, division, and various objectionable states of mind. All the works of the flesh contribute to the general misery and unhappiness of the individual, being thoroughly un-satisfying and un-fulfilling.

3. What is the very first fruit Paul lists? Galatians 5:22;Romans 5:5.Is love the basic characteristic of God's nature? 1 John 4:16.Is it the greatest attribute God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 13:13.(Be sure to read all of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

COMMENT: The first and most important fruit of God’s Spirit dwelling in the minds and hearts of converted human beings is LOVE. It is not just another form of human love, but the divine love that comes directly from God!

4. Is this the same love that will enable us to "fulfill"—to obey—God’s laws? Romans 13:10.

COMMENT: The love of God—imparted to human beings by the Holy Spirit- runs down the riverbed of God’s law—the Ten Commandments. It is manifested first of all in adoration and worship of God and literal obedience to Him; and then in outgoing concern, compassion, kindness and service toward other human beings (see Matthew 22:37-40). The original Greek word for the word "love" (in Galatians 5:22)is agape. In context it means devotedness or kindly concern—an intense desire to serve God and man. John said: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments..." (1 John 5:2-3).

Notice the two necessary elements: 1) love God, and 2) love the children of God—human beings.

5. What is one of the principle ways in which love manifests itself toward our neighbors? Romans 13:10.

COMMENT: Did you notice that? The kind of love imparted by God’s Spirit works no ill to anybody! Rather, God’s love is just the opposite—a deep concern and an intense desire to serve, help and encourage others. When you receive the Holy Spirit, this is the very first fruit you should begin to show. You should think or work no ill toward anyone, but rather learn, develop, think on and act on a profound concern and a fervent desire to serve God and man.

Now that’s a tall order! But over a period of time—not all at once— you can begin to exhibit this wonderful fruit in your life as you exercise and use God’s Holy Spirit. The other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23 and which we will now cover, amplify the attitude of love. They are simply added expressions of this divine love given to an individual whom God begets with His Holy Spirit.

6. What is the second fruit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22?Is it God’s will that we be literally filled with joy? Romans 15:13.

COMMENT: Some people think of "joy" as the end result of some kind of self-gratification—a new toy, new car, new girlfriend, new home, new baby, etc. Physically speaking, when things go "your way," the emotion you feel is "joy."

7. Does the Bible give rich, deep meaning to this vital fruit of God’s Spirit? Luke 15:7-10.

COMMENT: What causes the angels to have joy? Is it something personal they receive? Is it adding to or gratifying the self in some way? It is none of these. Their joy is in seeing others receive something good for them—in this case as a result of peoples’ repentance, which eventually leads to eternal Sonship in God’s Kingdom. The angels delight in seeing human beings begin to learn the way of life that will result in the good, lasting, permanent blessings of God’s Kingdom.

8. What kind of joy does Jesus Christ experience? Hebrews 12:2.

COMMENT: Christ was willing to suffer in anticipation of the real joy he would afterward experience in seeing fellow heirs born into God’s Kingdom. This was made possible only through the sacrifice of His life!

"Joy" received from personal gratification is only temporary. The car wears out, the ball game is over, the baby grows up, the stomach empties. None of these physical things—though perfectly all right to enjoy for the time—can bring permanent, lasting joy. Christ and the righteous angels receive joy from the outgoing giving of themselves to God and others! This "kind" of joy lasts for all eternity and does not require constant bolstering and rejuvenating with more and more objects and things.

9. What is the third fruit which God’s Spirit will manifest in a Christian’s life? Galatians 5:22.

COMMENT: Peace of mind is what everyone would like to have, but what so few really possess. Many vainly attempt to achieve peace of mind through escape into alcohol, other drugs, bizarre activities, etc. A person who truly has peace of mind has greater control over his emotions—even in trying circumstances. He enjoys greater tranquility and calm, quiet serenity, together with orderliness of mind.

10. Does peace of mind come from keeping the Ten Commandments? Psalms 119:165.

COMMENT: No one who consistently breaks God’s law can have real peace of mind. He will have fears and frustrations, as well as a guilty conscience. Notice how David’s words apply: Does a thief have peace of mind when he sees a police car driving by? Is he calm and serene? If he’s a good actor, he may appear to be outwardly, but inside he is a seething caldron,hotly activated by his adrenal glands. Always he has to be prepared to run and escape. This man can never find real peace unless and until he repents of—QUITS—breaking God’s Ten Commandments, especially the eighth! A liar is no better off. He must continue to lie in order to cover up the lies he has already told. Solomon wrote: "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel" (Proverbs 20:17). The liar must always be on the alert to avoid having to "eat his words." And when he finally does, they will taste like gravel. One can never have peace of mind with this type of pressure weighing on him all the time. The person who keeps God’s laws knows he is doing the right thing. His goals and purposes are stabilized. His life isn’t fraught with frustrations. He has no guilty conscience. He is at peace with God, with himself, and with his neighbor. He has "the peace of God which passes all understanding" (Php 4:7).

11. What is the fourth fruit of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22.

COMMENT: "Longsuffering is an old English word for patience. It is also forbearance and clemency—which is the ability to have mercy. One who is short-tempered and easily upset with the faults and inabilities of others is inviting real trouble for himself—physically as well as spiritually. Emotionally induced illnesses can result from the lack of longsuffering.

Patience is that steadiness of mind by which you wait for the result to be achieved. One who is patient does not become frustrated because problems don’t always lend themselves to immediate solutions. Godly longsuffering (or patience) can only come from exercising the Holy Spirit.

12. Is gentleness also an important fruit or result of having the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22.

COMMENT: Gentleness means first of all usefulness, then willingness, graciousness, affability—one who obliges. A gentleman knows how to attend to other people's needs; he has taken the time to learn the social graces; he is courteous. But gentleness is much more. Notice Paul's statement to the Thessalonians: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7). The apostle used this analogy to describe how he and others of God's ministers dealt with the members of God's Church. A nurse must be firm and loving, kind and sure, able and compassionate—all at once! She must clothe, feed, train, and clean up the messes of her charges. It takes a qualified as well as a willing person to be a good nurse. The gentle person is willing to take extra steps to look out for the needs of others. He or she is willing to dirty the hands to do whatever is necessary.

13. Is goodness also a remarkable attribute of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22.

COMMENT: Goodness describes a person possessing God-like qualities of virtue, uprightness and true character. This fruit of the Holy Spirit could probably be described as a summary fruit—summing up the character of a person who is exhibiting the other nine fruits listed by Paul, and as a result is daily becoming more God-like.

14. Is faith one of the vital fruits of the Spirit of God? Galatians 5:22.What is God's definition of "faith"? Hebrews 11:1.Did righteous men and women of old possess this kind of faith? Read this entire chapter.

COMMENT: Faith is the "substance"—more accurately the assurance or confidence—"of things hoped for...." Before you receive what you hope for, you already have it in substance, and that substance—that assurance or confidence that you shall possess it—is faith! Faith is your evidence that you shall have what you do not yet see.

15. Is it possible to please God without faith? Hebrews 11:6.Must obedience to God and other good works clearly accompany one's faith in order to make it alive and acceptable to God? Read James 2:1-26, James 2:14-26.

COMMENT: As Hebrews 11:6 explains, faith toward God is expressed in absolute recognition that God exists and that He blesses the obedient. This faith is acquired. You cannot cause yourself to have that kind of faith through autosuggestion!

16. Is the faith which all Christians must possess, and which comes as a free gift from God (Ephesians 2:8)through the Holy Spirit, in reality the faith of Jesus Christ? Php 3:9;Romans 3:22.

17. Did Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Galatians 2:20.How did Christ live in him? Php 2:5;Romans 8:9-10.Then did Paul live by the very faith of Christ? Notice Galatians 2:20 once again.

COMMENT: Paul did not live by his own faith. Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God from Christ implanted in Paul's mind the same kind of faith that can be in your mind! That faith— the very faith of Jesus Christ—will enable you to live a life of obedience to God as did the apostle Paul and all of the righteous men and women of God.

If we were able, of ourselves, to supply the faith to obey God, we would earn our own salvation. It would be the result of self-righteousness that are as "filthy rags" to God (Isaiah 64:6). But the

above scriptures speak only of the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith—not your faith. And Christ in us imparts His own strong faith to us that trusts God to make our spiritual obedience possible, thus enabling us to please God. (Much more about this Godly faith will be covered in the next lesson.)

18. Will meekness also be one of the traits of a Spirit-led individual? Galatians 5:23.Who set an outstanding example in this regard? Numbers 12:3.

COMMENT: Many falsely assume that meekness is always synonymous with weakness. Before his conversion, Moses was an arrogant and forceful individual. But after his conversion he became so dedicated to God and filled with the Holy Spirit, he was considered to be the meekest man on earth. No longer did he seek to exalt himself, but became lowly and humble in attitude. When God was about to disinherit and destroy the children of Israel because of their many rebellions, Moses—in spite of many false personal accusations against him—entreated God to save them (Numbers 14:1-45), and in meekness he instructed those who "opposed themselves" (a required trait of a servant of God—see 2 Timothy 2:24-25). A meek person is not a revengeful person!

19. What is the last, and one of the least understood fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul? Galatians 5:23.

COMMENT: The world has often misunderstood the meaning of the word "temperance." Temperance does not mean abstinence! Temperance means self-control, continence, self-government, moderation—particularly in reference to sensual appetites. The proverbs of Solomon are replete with exhortations about temperance—a vital attribute of God's Spirit which must also be exercised.

20. When one receives God's Holy Spirit, will these precious fruits suddenly appear overnight—almost all at once? 2 Peter 3:18;Matthew 5:48.

COMMENT: Fruit does not appear overnight on a tree. It takes time, water, the nutrients of the soil and sunlight to grow. Likewise, it takes time for one to grow spiritually and manifest the "fruit of the Spirit"!

21. How can a person start down the road toward possessing the wonderful fruits imparted by the Holy Spirit of God? Acts 2:38.

Spirit Must Be Used and Renewed

One is spiritually minded to the degree that he produces the fruits of God's Spirit in his daily life. But merely having the Spirit as a begettal will not make you spiritually minded unless you draw on and USE the Holy Spirit every day!

Let's notice how the example of the Corinthian Church in Paul's day bears this out.

1. Were the members of the Church of God in Corinth begotten by the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 3:16.Yet were many of them not really showing the fruit of God's Spirit? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.

COMMENT: Notice that Paul was addressing the Church of God. They were converted. They were the body of Christ, "brethren" with Paul. But they were acting like the average man on the street would act, conducting themselves in an unspiritual manner. They had strifes and arguing, debating and contentions. There was division and party spirit among them. These are some of the very

same things listed as the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21!

What was their problem? Since they were converted and had God’s Spirit, which makes one a member of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13), why were they producing these unspiritual, fleshly works?

2. Must the Holy Spirit be put to use? 2 Timothy 1:6-7.

COMMENT: Even though the members at Corinth had the Spirit as a begettal, they seemed to have lost sight of the fact that it must be used and drawn upon to produce its fruit. They were producing works of the flesh—"doing what comes naturally"—simply because they were not "stirring up" the Spirit of Christ and drawing on it to produce the results of the mind of Christ! (Php 1:11.)

Another probable and perhaps obvious reason some were acting "carnal" was because they also lacked a supply of the Spirit of Christ. Notice how the following scriptures would bear this out.

3. Would Christ’s analogy in John 7:37-39 indicate that His Spirit flows into and out from one? Notice also Isaiah 44:3;Jeremiah 17:13 and John 4:10,John 4:13-14 in this regard. (Recall from previous studies we learned that the "LORD" referred to in Isaiah 44:1-28 and Jeremiah 17:1-27 is none other than the Christ of the New Testament before He became a human being.)

4. Therefore, does one receive all at once enough of the Spirit of Christ to last as long as he lives, or must the "supply" be replenished every day? Php 1:19;2 Corinthians 4:16.

COMMENT: The Spirit of God, which is administered by Christ, is active- DYNAMIC! It is a moving force that can’t be bottled up within you. Jesus compared it to living waters which come into you, and then flow out from you in "good works"—love, joy, peace, obedience, etc. It circulates like electricity in a complete circuit—from God, into you, and then out from you as the "fruits of the Spirit," and then back to God.

Since the Spirit must flow into and out from us, then obviously it must be continually supplied. Therefore, the supply of the Holy Spirit must be renewed in us daily through contact with God in believing prayer (Luke 11:13). To put it in the vernacular, our "spiritual battery" must be continually "charged up." We must daily "plug in" to the POWER SOURCE. That source of the Holy Spirit is GOD! Not Generally Available Before Christ

1. Did God initially offer the first human beings opportunity to receive His Holy Spirit? Genesis 2:8-9,Genesis 2:16-17.

COMMENT: Adam and Eve were freely offered access to God’s Holy Spirit and resultant eternal life, which were symbolically represented by the fruit of the "tree of life."

2. But from which tree did they choose to eat? Genesis 3:3-7.

COMMENT: Though their Creator warned them of the dire consequences of eating fruit from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," Adam and Eve were persuaded by the devil’s clever arguments to partake instead of the fruit that leads to death!

3. What was their punishment for disobeying God? Genesis 3:16-19.Were they denied further access to the Holy Spirit? Genesis 3:22-24.

COMMENT: God’s express intention from the beginning was to give man the Holy Spirit. It was only after our first parents directly disobeyed a specific command from their very Creator that the Holy Spirit was denied. And so, it is truly axiomatic that God gives His Spirit only to those who strive to obey Him (Acts 5:32).

4. Did our first parents’ transgression set a pattern for the entire human race? Romans 5:12.

COMMENT: Had Adam and Eve partaken of the tree in the Garden of Eden that represented God’s Holy Spirit—the "tree of [eternal] life"—they would have been begotten of God, and ultimately received eternal life, if they had continued to obey God. But Adam and Eve had to desire the Spirit of God and surrender themselves to God’s will in order to receive His Spirit—exactly as all must do today. Instead, they chose not to receive the Spirit. They listened to Satan and pursued the way that leads only to death (Genesis 2:17). And because of this sin, God withheld His Holy Spirit of love and eternal life from mankind. From the very moment mortal man disobeyed God, he was cut off from access to the Spirit of God and the gift of eternal life. Ever since then, God has permitted man to go his own way, setting apart 6,000 years during which He has allowed mankind to learn the painful results of following the dictates of the carnal mind. And mankind has continued choosing the way of disobedience to God (Romans 3:23), which has resulted in untold suffering and death! An atonement, therefore, had to be made for mankind—which was to be the sacrifice of Jesus Christ approximately 4000 years later. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit could not be offered to mankind in general in the face of such unexpiated disobedience. But there were some notable exceptions.

5. Did the Patriarchs and Prophets of antiquity have access to the Holy Spirit? 1 Peter 1:10-11.

COMMENT: Notice that "the Spirit of Christ...was in them." From Adam to Christ, apparently none were called to spiritual salvation except those called to perform a special mission. From Adam to Noah we have the record of Abel, Enoch and Noah—some 1900 years! From Noah to the calling of Israel out of Egypt there was Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. And then, of course, there was Moses and a few others. These few had the Holy Spirit and will be born into God’s Kingdom, as we’re clearly told in Hebrews 11:1-40.

6. Did Caleb have the Holy Spirit too? Numbers 14:24-30.What about Joshua? Numbers 27:18;Deuteronomy 34:9.

7. Did the Patriarch and Prophet David also possess the Spirit of Christ? 1 Samuel 16:13.(Remember that the "LORD" was Christ.) What did David say that further proves he did indeed have the Spirit dwelling in him? Psalms 51:11.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, before His human birth, was the member of the Godhead who administered the Holy Spirit to all the faithful men of old. He sent the Spirit to be in them—to give them faith and power. Notice: "And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised [God’s Kingdom], since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect [at the first resurrection]" (Hebrews 11:39-40,RSV).

Perhaps the New Testament "technicalities" of how one is begotten and born into God’s Kingdom were not fully revealed to the Patriarchs and Prophets as they are to us today. However, they knew that through the One who would come in the human flesh to give His life as a ransom for many, they too would inherit eternal life.

8. Did God promise long ago that He would again make His Spirit available to man? Ezekiel 36:26-27.Will it make obedience to His laws possible? Same verses and Hebrews 8:8-11.

9. Did Jesus specifically promise that the Holy Spirit would dwell in His disciples after His death? John 14:16-19.

10. Is the way of salvation and receipt of the Holy Spirit now open to all who are called by God? John 6:44;Acts 10:43;Acts 13:26;Acts 2:38.

COMMENT: Today, all who are called of God can have His life and characteristics as a very part of their being, enabling them to overcome and grow spiritually toward the Kingdom of God.

11. Will the knowledge of God and opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit ultimately be made available to everyone? Isaiah 11:9;Joel 2:28-29.

Spirit Arrives On Pentecost

1. What did Jesus promise His disciples regarding the receipt of power from heaven? Luke 24:49.Where did He tell them to wait for this power? Same verse and Acts 1:4-5,Acts 1:8.

2. What miraculous display of power did the Holy Spirit cause upon its initial arrival in Jerusalem? Acts 2:1-12.

COMMENT: The Spirit of God came with a sound as a mighty rushing wind; with the appearance of divided—equally distributed—tongues of fire; it filled the disciples, speaking through them in such a manner that every man there from every nation heard them in his own language! (The miracle was in the hearing as well as in the speaking—Acts 2:6-8).

3. What was the name of the day on which this great display of the Holy Spirit’s power occurred? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: The word "Pentecost" is a Greek word meaning "fiftieth." The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (a Sunday), fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection. The sudden, spectacular and awe-inspiring exhibit of divine power working within Christ’s disciples on that day of Pentecost heralded to the whole world the beginning of the time when all who would thirst for the Holy Spirit could receive it.

It marked the beginning of the crowning act of God’s supreme creative work in man—the development of Godly character. It was a forerunner of the era foretold by God long ago when He said to His ancient nation Israel (and through it to the whole world): "...the days come...that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts..." (Jeremiah 31:31-33). This mighty manifestation of the Spirit marked the coming of the power which God would use to engrave His law within the hearts of those who surrender themselves to Him. That is why God made this such a spectacular and momentous event. It was of tremendous import to all mankind, never to be forgotten and

apparently never to be repeated in the same way.

How to Receive the Holy Spirit 1. Is the Holy Spirit a gift from God? Acts 10:45;2 Timothy 1:6.

2. How readily will God give us His Holy Spirit today if we ask for it? Luke 11:10-13.But how do we know God will hear us when we ask Him in prayer? 1 John 3:22-24.

3. Are repentance and baptism clearly initial steps in our obedience to God by which He is bound to keep His promise to give us (beget us by) His Holy Spirit? Mark 1:14-15;Acts 2:38;Mark 5:32.

COMMENT: Notice the stress placed upon obedience, upon submission to the will of God—to the law of God. God will give His Holy Spirit only to those who have demonstrated—both by attitude and actions—that they want to obey Him.

Jesus said, "Not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42). God wants to see a submissive, obedient attitude in us before He gives us His Spirit. How plain it is that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of total submission and obedience to the Father. If we surrender our wills unconditionally to God, He will give us His Spirit! The subjects of repentance and baptism were covered thoroughly in Lessons 9 and 10. Suffice it to say, by way of review, that repentance means to turn around and go the other way—to forsake all of your ways which have been contrary to God’s law, and turn to God’s way which is the way of His law. To "believe the gospel" means to believe the very message Jesus brought—the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, which most assuredly includes belief on Him as personal Savior.

God makes it very plain that no one who continuously practices sin (as a way of life) will ever be born into His universe-ruling family (Galatians 5:19-21). All who desire to become born-again members of God’s Family and co-rulers with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God, must stop sinning now— stop breaking His laws! All must REPENT of rebellion against God; must desire and actually begin to literally OBEY His Word, submitting to His authority over their lives—keeping His commandments!

After belief and sincere, heartfelt, deep repentance of sin, the next step toward becoming a Christian is water baptism. Baptism is an outward symbol of our repentance of our old sinful, disobedient life—of our complete departure from our old sinful way of living—and of our willingness now to obey God in every way.

Once you have taken these two steps, then you are unconditionally promised the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands of one of God’s called and chosen ministers.

God has bound Himself to perform His part if you first perform yours. God says: "... You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is an absolute promise of God! There is no "perhaps," "probably," or "maybe." You WILL RECEIVE the Holy Spirit because God promised it!

You can ask God thereafter to direct you, through His Holy Spirit, to lead a new life in conformity with His revealed Word—the Bible. The Spirit and God’s Church

1. Once we have truly repented, been baptized and received the miraculous begettal of God’s Holy Spirit, do we automatically become part of a "body"? 1 Corinthians 12:13.What body is Paul talking about? 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23;Colossians 1:18.

COMMENT: In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the apostle Paul has drawn an analogy between the human body and God's Church. And as we discovered in Lesson 10, in 1 Corinthians 12:13 he is speaking about being baptized—put into—the spiritual "body" or Church of God.

Therefore, "joining" a group that calls itself a church—having one's name on the membership roll of some group—does not make one in true fact a member of the Church Jesus founded. We cannot become a part of the body of Christ by simply making a decision to "attend" a church service. The stamp of a member of the true church of God is the begettal of the Holy Spirit. Those who have not received this Spirit are simply not a part of the true body of Christ—they are not real Christians! (Romans 8:9.) God promises His Spirit only to those who repent of sin and are baptized (Acts 2:38;Acts 5:32). But after we are baptized and begotten by God's Spirit—what then?

2. What did Christ commission His ministers to do for those He has put in His Church? Matthew 28:19-20;John 21:15-17;1 Peter 5:1-3.(Notice the last three words of each of the three verses in John 21:1-25.) For what purpose are God's ministers to "feed" Christ's "sheep"? Ephesians 4:11-15.

COMMENT: God has set His called and chosen ministers in His Church to "feed the flock" so they may grow spiritually—"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ [the Church of God]: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [fully mature, full grown] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13). As mentioned previously in Lesson 8, in the human realm it is the father who begets children. He does not "bring forth"; the mother does that, later. After the father's part, which initiates the process, there is always a lapse of time leading to final birth. So just as a human mother feeds her begotten child within her womb through the placenta and umbilical cord, God's children are nourished with spiritual food within His Church. The parallel is very similar. Spiritually, God's Church is the "mother" (Galatians 4:26)of all who have been begotten by His Holy Spirit. Christ has given His ministers the responsibility to instruct, teach and counsel the members of the Church (Hebrews 13:17). And as the human mother carries her unborn baby in that part of her body where she can best protect it from physical harm, the function of God's Church is to also protect the begotten children of God from the false doctrines of false ministers.

Through this "feeding" process, each Christian receives the spiritual nourishment necessary to grow spiritually until he or she is ready to be actually born at the resurrection as a very member in the joyous, ruling Family of God!

Finding the True Church

We have just seen that the true Church of God is that body of believers who individually have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this church is a spiritual organism. And Jesus Christ is its head. The true church understands God's plan of salvation, and is fulfilling Christ's commission to preach the true gospel as a witness to all nations. And as we also learned, the church is nurturing the spiritually begotten children of God whom He has put into it.

Knowing this, it then becomes all important for you to definitely locate the true body of Christ. But exactly how does one go about finding God's Church and His ministers? Just where is the Church

God is working through today?

Don’t all of the churches of denominational Christianity claim to be part of the true body of Christ? Will any church say it is not the church Jesus founded? Of course not!

What, then, are some of the signs that would lead us to the true body of Christ? 1. Would the true Church of God follow Christ by upholding God’s law? Matthew 5:17;Matthew 19:17-19;Matthew 28:19-20;John 15:10.Would that Church be striving to literally keep the Ten Commandments of God and other instructions of Christ? John 14:15;Revelation 3:7-8;Revelation 12:17.(Chapter 12 of Revelation personifies God’s true Church as a woman.)

COMMENT: The true Church upholds God’s law. It recognizes that God set in motion a law that, if obeyed, would bring humanity every good thing--abundant well-being—a full life.

God’s Church boldly proclaims that His law is not done away, but has been spiritually expanded by Christ (Isaiah 42:21)to cover every aspect of human activity. The true Church says with David: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). It recognizes that God’s law is one of His greatest gifts to mankind.

Very few churches today can claim to teach obedience to every one of God’s Ten Commandments. Those few who do acknowledge these commands refuse to obey other instructions of God found in the Bible. So don’t assume that a church professing the name of God or Christ is necessarily a church that literally obeys Christ!

2. Would God’s Church be attempting to discredit or devalue the Bible— relying on human traditions and ideas for its principal doctrines? Or would it deeply understand that the whole Bible—Old Testament and New—is the true Word of God? Luke 4:4;2 Timothy 3:15-17;2 Timothy 4:2;Isaiah 8:20.

COMMENT: The only "scriptures" accessible to Timothy were books of the Old Testament. God’s Church believes all of the Bible to be inspired by God. The true Church uses the Old Testament as did Christ and the apostles, and believes it is also a part of God’s Word for us today. (Obviously it must be understood in the light of the New Testament.)

We have briefly touched on only a few of the unique characteristics of the true Church Jesus built. Others may be readily discovered by requesting our literature shown in the photo at right. (Use the convenient card and envelope enclosed with this lesson to request this free literature.) The Holy Spirit and You

Now let’s be very specific as far as you are concerned. How do you know when you are repentant? How do you become baptized and receive God’s Holy Spirit? How can you come in contact with one of the true ministers of God?

These basic questions have already been answered in this and previous lessons. As most of you students already know, God’s ministers are within reach of all areas of the United States, British Commonwealth, Western Europe and much of the rest of the world. So if you really desire water baptism and the receipt of God’s Spirit- and/or you have further questions which need to be answered—write and let us know if you would like to talk with the minister of the Worldwide Church of God in your area.

Remember: when you do receive God’s Holy Spirit, you will begin to personally sense a remarkably thrilling change in your mind—your attitude and approach toward life. And as you grow spiritually, you will experience a steady perfection of your character, a new insight in your understanding, a rejuvenated zest for life and a fantastically happy outlook toward the future!

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished the test, check your choices with the correct answers at the end of this lesson, and then rate yourself.

1. The Holy Spirit A. is the "spirit in man." B. is simply our "inner consciousness." C. is the spiritual life and nature of God that we may receive from Him. D. is the spiritual power of God that we were born with.

2. Who is a true Christian in God’s sight? A. One who professes Christianity. B. Most church goers today. C. Those who have been "born again." D. Only those who have been begotten by the Holy Spirit.

3. Why is it necessary to be begotten by God’s Spirit? A. Because spiritual life and growth in us is impossible without spiritual begettal. B. It isn’t necessary since we were already begotten spiritually at birth. C. So we can live perfectly in this life. D. So we can be born of God at the same time.

4. What does the Father promise spirit-begotten Christians? A. Just a slightly better life here and now. B. Riches, power and glory in this life. C. That He will one day change or raise them to immortality, power and glory. D. Nirvana.

5. Which one of the following is true? A. Spiritual concepts and principles are not beyond the comprehension of human intellect alone. B. The Bible cannot be understood in any respect. C. Only the greatest minds can understand spiritual truths with their natural minds. D. The Holy Spirit gives one the capacity to grasp the spiritually revealed truth of God.

6. How can one come to truly obey God? A. It isn’t really possible. B. Through sheer human willpower. C. Through the Holy Spirit which forces you to obey. D. Through God’s Spirit which will grant you the spiritual faith and strength to resist the devil and do God’s will.

7. What is the love of God? A. Certainly not an attribute of His Holy Spirit. B. The chief character trait of God. C. It definitely has nothing to do with keeping His commandments. D. A sentimental feeling—another form of human love.

8. The true Church of God A. rejects the laws of God. B. is not fulfilling Christ’s commission to preach the true gospel as a witness to all nations. C. upholds His Ten Commandments and strives to live by every word of God. D. is not interested in the spiritual welfare of His spirit-begotten children.

9. What makes one a member of the true Church? A. Having one’s name on its membership roll. B. One’s belief in Christ. C. One’s baptism in water. D. One’s spiritual begettal by the Holy Spirit. 10. What is the purpose for God’s Church and His ministry? A. To make the members feel righteous. B. To take the members’ tithes. C. To help the members become more Christ-like, and to protect them from the devil’s false ministers and doctrines. D. To make the members’ decisions

for them.

TRUE OR FALSE 11. Since we can’t become spiritually perfect in this life, there is no use striving toward perfection. T F 12. We should expect today the special manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s arrival on the day of Pentecost. T F 13. The "fruits of the Spirit" are manifested by those who possess and use the Holy Spirit. T F 14. The Spirit of Jesus Christ in a true Christian must be renewed daily to produce spiritual "fruit." T F 15. There is no way to discern which is the true Church of God today. T F Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand column to the correct/, related phrase In the right-hand column.

16. Pentecost

A. Born again

B. Agape

17. "Vine"

C. Spirit-begotten

D. Spiritual fruit

18. "Germ"

E. Parakletos

F. Spirit arrives

19. Heirs

G. Spiritual growth

H. Spirit of Christ

20. Joy

I. Jesus Christ

J. Spirit of begettal

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-C 5-D 9-D 13-T 17-I 19-20 correct excellent 2-D 6-D 10-C 14-T 18-J 16-18 correct good 3-A 7-B 11-F 15-F 19-C 13-15 correct fair 4-C 8-C 12-F 16-F 20-D

Lesson 12 - Part 1

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 12 - Part 1 Christianity Is A Way Of Life

Christianity is indeed a way of life. There is no more well established fact in all of the Bible. But what, specifically, is that way, and how may we successfully live it? The book of Acts chronicles the history of the early New Testament Church of God. It hits the high spots of the major events in briefest summary form. And in it Luke, the author, attests to the fact that to live the life of a certain way—to do certain things—to conform to certain standards.

Apollos was an early Christian who was an excellent speaker, being extremely well versed in Old Testament scriptures. He preached boldly. However, he was very much in need of better understanding—he did not quite have the whole picture. It remained for a dedicated couple in the Church of God to fill in the details.

Notice the account in Acts 18:26:" ... whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him [Apollos] unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (emphasis ours throughout lesson). Real Christianity then, as detailed in the Bible, is a "way" of life—God’s way!

Roots in the Old Testament

Royalty, heads of state, and government officials in the apostle Paul’s day recognized Christianity as a distinct pattern of life. Paul, under house arrest, defended his way of life—the Christian way—to the procurator of Judaea. Notice Felix’s reaction to Paul’s words: "And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them [put off any immediate action]... " (Acts 24:22).

Earlier Paul had explained to Felix: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). A vital point: The Christian way of life has its roots in the Old Testament. It is established on the Ten Commandments, as well as other laws of God which are based on principles of the "basic ten." Though far from being devoid of pleasure, God’s way definitely is not a nihilistic, libertine course in conventional pleasure-seeking.

God’s way of life is the sensible way to live practically and abundantly in areas such as successfully managing your finances, building and beautifying your marriage, and even how to protect your health. Simply stated, God’s law is the way to all the GOOD THINGS in life—to peace, happiness, and ultimately an eternal life of satisfying accomplishment.

God’s Great Law the Standard The apostle James refers to the Ten Commandments as the "royal law of liberty" (James 2:8-12). That is because they free their adherents from the bondage of the hurtful ways of this world. The Ten Commandments also clearly reveal the great love God has for His human children. They are a reflection of the perfect character of God which can be summed up in the word love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:16).

John, often referred to as the "apostle of love," wrote: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3,RSV).

Before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ told His disciples, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). God's love and His law fit hand in glove. They do not oppose each other as some have been misled to believe. As Jesus plainly stated, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The "Test" Commandment

Most who profess to be Christians today partially keep the Ten Commandments to one degree or another. But the fourth commandment has never been popular with this world's churches.

Few realize that the observance of the Sabbath day is one of the most important "signs" which identify a true Christian—one who follows the example of Christ. The Bible shows that the fourth commandment is the test commandment! The Christian's keeping of the true Sabbath is an illustration to God of his serious commitment to live by His Word.

We saw in our previous studies that God defines a Christian as one whom He has begotten by His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11). In a powerful sermon not long after that memorable day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), Peter pointed out something most vital concerning the receiving of God's Spirit. Notice Acts 5:32:"And we are witnesses to these things [Christ as Savior], and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him" (RSV). A willing and obedient attitude is one of the things God looks for in a potential Son of His. God inspired Isaiah to write: " ...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor [humble] and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). A Christian will therefore want to obey the fourth commandment!

Keeping the Sabbath sometimes involves considerable faith on the part of God's people. With the flow of this world's values, cultures and interests cascading in the opposite direction, it is not always easy to swim upstream. But the blessings are manifold to those who have the courage and faith to observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

Special Annual Days

Inasmuch as the seventh commandment against adultery includes, in principle, prohibition of all forms of illicit sexual conduct, so the fourth commandment, by amplification, includes other special God-ordained days which were given to Israel when the Old Testament Church began in the wilderness. As the weekly Sabbath is holy time to God, so are seven annual Sabbath days holy to God—all for a very good reason. The seventh-day Sabbath looks backward as a memorial to remind us of the fact that God is Creator, Ruler, Sustainer; and it looks forward to Christ's coming rule in the Millennium when mankind will experience "rest" from war, poverty, fear and suffering. It also reveals that God has a great and wonderful purpose and a plan for all of mankind! The seven annual Sabbaths/festivals give the overview of the working out of God's plan for man step by step. The reason man's full, awesome potential is not understood by the professing Christian world today is because most churches have neglected the very days God says are holy to Him. A Little Known Financial Law The weekly Sabbath and each of the annual Sabbaths are special times committed to physical rest and spiritual worship of God. In a sense we give these portions of time back to God. As we do we are rewarded with greater understanding of His way, even as we are rejuvenated and renewed physically and spiritually on these days.

Likewise, God requires that His children return a portion of their income for His use and purpose on this earth. Even though the Creator God is not limited by physical resources, He has always conducted a Work among and through human beings. Today, God desires that Christians have an active role with Him in introducing the knowledge of His way to others by helping finance His Work on earth.

Long ago, even during the time of Abraham, God used the tithing (or "tenthing") system to underwrite His Work for that time. His Church in the twentieth century employs the very same method to conduct His Work of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. The act of tithing gives us the opportunity to express our recognition of God’s sovereignty and lordship over the entire earth, and over each of us individually. It is an expression of our willing and cheerful adherence to the first and great commandment—worshipping the true God and Him only. And as with observance of the weekly and annual Sabbath days, the man or woman who fulfills God’s financial law of tithing will reap the inevitable physical and spiritual blessings promised in His Word.

Obedience and Overcoming

Although the true Christian strives to be obedient to all the laws of God, he knows he cannot obey them perfectly. He soon discovers he still has besetting and recurring sins, as well as bad habits that are not easy to cast aside. The Christian life, as revealed in the Bible, is one of overcoming and growing spiritually toward the goal of being spiritually mature like Christ. Through our studies we learned that this final change to immortal, spiritual perfection will occur at the resurrection of the dead in Christ. In the meantime, God expects Spirit-begotten Christians to be developing more and more of the very character of Christ as they learn to follow His way of life. But overcoming and conquering sin is impossible by human strength alone. It must be accomplished in partnership with God by the very faith of Christ—a gift from God through His Holy Spirit which He promises to give us upon repentance and baptism. As Christians, we will still, through temptation, sometimes stumble spiritually and sin. But our loving and most merciful Father in heaven is ready and willing to forgive and restore us to the right path of overcoming and growing—if we will acknowledge our sins and ask His forgiveness.

How beautiful, encouraging and rewarding is the way of God when we understand it!

Now, let’s look further into the vital details of what the Christian way of life is really all about.

LESSON 12 What Is a Real Christian?

What is a real Christian? Could you give the Bible definition? Few have studied the Bible to learn what God expects of them. A precious few know what the Christian way of life is really all about.

Jesus gave us the very basis of real Christianity in what is commonly called the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew, chapters 5-7). This occasion actually started out as a private, personal lesson He gave to His disciples (students or learners). Jesus pointed out those characteristics, often called "beatitudes," which would clearly identify His true followers.

Before we pick up the story in Matthew 5:1-48 and focus on a few specific aspects of biblical Christianity, we suggest that you first read the entirety of chapters Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34 and Matthew 7:1-29.

1. What did Jesus say belongs to the poor in spirit? Matthew 5:3.When He spoke of the "poor in spirit," did He mean that they would be lacking the Spirit of God? Romans 8:9;Luke 11:13.

COMMENT: No, Jesus isn't suggesting that they must lack God's Spirit, as did the five foolish virgins in the parable of Matthew 25:1-46. Rather, He went on to show that those who are truly humble in attitude of mind would be blessed and assured of being in God's Kingdom.

2. What are the meek in Christ destined to inherit? Matthew 5:5.Was Jesus "meek"? Matthew 11:29.Will a Christian exhibit the characteristic of meekness in the way he conducts his daily life? Ephesians 4:1-2.

COMMENT: There is a difference between being meek and being weak. Jesus was meek but not weak! He endured abuse and injury with patience and without resentment. He didn't deliberately try to stir up arguments and trouble. A meek person will not try to justify the self, especially when he is wrong. Neither does he feel he is superior to others. He does not try to "get even" with others, nor get revenge.

3. What will a true follower of Christ—a Christian—be "thirsting" for? Matthew 5:6.What is the Bible definition of "righteousness"? Psalms 119:172. Did Jesus come to destroy God's great law, or to keep it? Matthew 5:17-19.

COMMENT: To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to yearn and be deeply motivated to be obedient to God—to keep His laws, which are given to us in loving concern for our own good.

Those who are truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be studying for true understanding, and will be willing to change when they see they've been wrong, admitting their wrong beliefs, their mistakes, their sins. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God..." (2 Timothy 2:15), wrote Paul to Timothy. "Prove all things..." (1 Thessalonians 5:21), Paul said to the Thessalonians.

4. Who did Paul say are justified before God—the hearers or the doers of God's law? Romans 2:13.Did Paul make it plain that even though the unmerited pardon of our sins is by the grace of God through faith in Christ's sacrifice, nevertheless a Christian is still obligated to God to keep His law? Read Romans 3:31 and all of Romans 6:1-23.

5. Who did Jesus say will enter the Kingdom of God? Matthew 7:21.What did the apostle Paul plainly say was most important for a Christian to be doing? 1 Corinthians 7:19.

COMMENT: Notice that in order to enter God's Kingdom, there is DOING required—not just the confession of Christ as our Savior. God is also very much concerned about our spiritual "works" after becoming a Christian. He makes it plain that we cannot make it into the Kingdom of God just by sitting back and thinking Christ has done it all for us.

6. Unless we have the love of God, can we really be a Christian? Read all of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (the word "charity" in the King James translation means love). What are we when we lack the love of God? 1 Corinthians 13:2.

7. Will God's love, which He imparts through His Spirit, lead one to keep His Ten Commandments—all ten of them? Romans 13:8-10.In what way did God inspire John to confirm

Paul’s statement—what is the Bible definition of God’s love? 1 John 5:2-3.How is God’s love perfected in one? 1 John 2:5. A Christian "Walks" with God

1. Is a Christian one who strives to follow Christ—to imitate His example- to "walk" with Him? 1 Peter 2:21;1 John 2:6.

2. Who is one of the first men in the Bible who "walked" with God? Genesis 5:22-24.What else are we told about Enoch? Hebrews 11:5,last part. Will he be in the resurrection? Hebrews 11:13,Hebrews 11:39-40.

3. What other great patriarch walked with God in the antediluvian world? Genesis 6:9.Did Noah therefore find grace in God’s sight? Verse 8. Was Noah clearly a faithful and righteous man, pleasing before God? Hebrews 11:7.

4. What was God’s command to Abraham? Genesis 17:1.Why could it be said that he did indeed walk with God? Genesis 26:5;Hebrews 11:8-10.

5. Was God also Abraham’s friend and companion? 2 Chronicles 20:7;Isaiah 41:8;James 2:23.Did God talk with Abraham as a close friend would? Genesis 18:17-19,23-33. (Recall from your previous studies that the "Lord" of the Old Testament was in reality the member of the God Family who later became Jesus Christ.) 6. Did God also talk with Moses as with a close friend? Exodus 33:11;Numbers 12:7-8;Deuteronomy 34:10.

7. How can we become one of Jesus Christ’s friends? John 15:14-15.

COMMENT: True friends walk together and talk together freely, without fear or embarrassment. They think much alike, and are in agreement, or else they are not real friends (Amos 3:3).

8. Did God specifically command His Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38)-- the nation of Israel—to walk in His ways; that is, to obey His laws? Deuteronomy 5:32-33;Deuteronomy 8:6;Deuteronomy 10:12;Deuteronomy 11:22;Deuteronomy 13:4;Deuteronomy 26:17;Deuteronomy 28:9.

9. Did God promise to walk with them if they walked with Him? Leviticus 26:3,Leviticus 26:12. Would He greatly bless them if they walked with Him? Leviticus 26:4-11.

10. But if the people of Israel chose to walk contrary to God—refused to walk in His ways—what did God say would happen to them? Leviticus 26:14-39.

COMMENT: To walk with God clearly means to obey His commandments and laws, and to do those things which are pleasing in His sight (Leviticus 26:1-3;1 John 3:22). It is the only way to really be a Christian!

11. What will be a Christian’s attitude toward the sinning society around him? 1 John 2:15-17;1 Peter 4:1-4;Revelation 18:4.What will he rather be striving to live by? Matthew 4:4.

COMMENT: A Christian will no longer be able to conscientiously follow all the customs and practices of the society around him. Where he formerly "went along with the crowd" in all social activities and business practices, he will now begin to question his lifestyle. He will begin asking, "What is God’s will? How does God say I should live?" He will begin saying, with Christ, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." And he will begin to diligently search the Bible to

learn the will of God, and follow it. Of course, God’s people must live in this world (John 17:15). And even while striving to fully obey God—not being conformed to this world’s ways (Romans 12:1-2)--they should strive to "...live peaceably with all men" (verse 18). And if a Christian has to disagree because of biblical teaching, he does so without being disagreeable and self-righteous about it.

While not "of the world" in the sense that Christ meant, those men and women of God having the Holy Spirit and a knowledge of His truth and abundant way of life, have a responsibility to be bright "lights" in the world (Matthew 5:14-16). Far from just "quietly glowing" like a 25-watt light bulb, or hiding their light "under a bushel," God’s people should be exhibiting the "fruit," or characteristics, of God’s Holy Spirit within them. They can reach out with friendliness and with a helping hand towards their neighbors and those they come in contact with every day. People not as yet called of God will be encouraged as they see a little of the mind and character of God in action through the living example set by individual Christians.

12. What steps has a Christian already taken to be recognized by God as one of His children? Acts 2:38.What has God bestowed upon him as a free and unearned gift according to his obedience? Same verse and Acts 5:32.("Holy Ghost" is an archaic rendering in the King James Version and should rather read "Holy Spirit.")

COMMENT: A Christian has been conquered by God. His "carnal," naturally antagonistic attitude toward God (Romans 8:7-8)is now broken. He has come to realize he had sinned against God, having broken His Holy, righteous law (1 John 3:4). Therefore he cried out to God and asked His forgiveness for those sins through the sacrifice of Christ, and a lifting of the death penalty which every sin incurs (Romans 6:23). Then he submitted to the ordinance of baptism which illustrated to God his deep sincerity. And as he expected God to stand behind His promise to beget him spiritually by the Holy Spirit, as a result of his repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands, he was indeed imbued by the Spirit of the Father and became a spiritually begotten child of God. It was then that he became a TRUE Christian ! (Romans 8:9-10.)

13. What does God call the person who claims to "know" Christ, but refuses to walk in His ways—refuses to keep His commandments? 1 John 2:4.What will the one who says he is a Christian actually be doing? 1 John 2:3, 1 John 2:5-6. How does this corroborate Solomon’s summation of every individual’s responsibility to God? Ecclesiastes 12:13.

COMMENT: A Christian has sincerely repented of his sins and is striving, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to LIVE by his Savior’s teachings. He is seeking to do God’s will in every aspect of his life as revealed in the Bible. And he is becoming a recipient of the happiness and blessings that come with obedience to God! The Ten Commandments The Jesus Christ of your Bible always preached the gospel of the government (or kingdom) of God. He proclaimed: "...repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Over and over again the Bible teaches repentance from sin, which is the breaking of God’s great spiritual law (1 John 3:4)summed up in ten great universal principles—the Ten Commandments. As we have already learned in our study of the Bible, repentance is the first step toward salvation. Before God will forgive our sins, we must repent of (turn from) breaking His law.

Solomon concluded: "... Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13.) Modern man is frustrated and incomplete because he lacks the living, vital contact with God that can come only by obedience to His Commandments!

Let’s review several vital facts about the Ten Commandments, and see how they apply to the Christian way of life.

1. Are all ten of God’s commandments conveniently listed for us in the Bible? Exodus 20:1-17;Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

2. Since neither of the two previous biblical listings of the Decalogue is numbered in the text, how may we know that there are ten? Exodus 34:28;Deuteronomy 4:13;Deuteronomy 10:4.

COMMENT: It is interesting to note that the second commandment is omitted from some early non-biblical listings, and the tenth commandment arbitrarily divided into two parts to make the number add up to ten. But it is not logical to divide the commandment against coveting into two parts consisting of not coveting 1) our neighbor’s wife and 2) our neighbor’s house. The last phrase of number ten plainly summarizes both aspects of coveting by telling us not to covet "any thing that is thy neighbor’s" (Exodus 20:17). It is evident that Paul understood this commandment by his simple statement: "Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). (If you haven’t done so already, be sure to send for our free booklet, The Ten Commandments, for a much more detailed study of all ten points.)

3. Did the patriarch Abraham—the "father" of the faithful (Romans 4:16)-- think it was important to keep God’s commandments? Genesis 26:5.What was the prophet David’s attitude toward obeying God’s law? Read Psalms 119:1-176 in its entirety.

COMMENT: Both Abraham and David were commandment keepers. They had great respect for God’s law. That is one of the reasons why they will both hold very responsible positions in the future government of God on earth.

David wrote: "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalms 119:97). David’s daily habit was to ponder and study God’s law. It was a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path (Psalms 119:1-5). His obedience to God’s commandments made him wiser than his enemies (Psalms 119:98). Throughout this Psalm, David declared how he loved God’s law and used it as a guide in his life.

4. Did Jesus Christ Himself obey the Ten Commandments? John 15:10.Did He teach others to obey them? Matthew 19:17-19.

COMMENT: These verses in Matthew 19:1-30 clearly show that Jesus specifically meant the Ten Commandments. He knew that God’s ten-point law would bring peace, fulfillment and joy to any individual or nation that would choose to obey it.

5. Does the Bible show that the very church Jesus built would today be teaching obedience to, and literally endeavoring to keep, the Ten Commandments and other instructions of Christ? Revelation 12:17;Revelation 14:12. (Revelation 12:1-17 personifies God’s Church as a woman.)

COMMENT: The Worldwide Church of God today upholds God’s law. It recognizes that God set in motion a law that, to the degree it is obeyed, would bring humanity every good thing—abundant well-being—a full life. God’s Church says with David: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). It recognizes that God’s law is one of His greatest gifts to mankind.

6. Is the law of God holy, just and good? Romans 7:12.Does peace of mind come from keeping the Ten Commandments? Psalms 119:165.

COMMENT: No one who consistently breaks God’s law can have real peace of mind. He will have fears and frustrations, and often a guilty conscience. But the person who keeps God’s laws has a clear conscience. He is at peace with God, with himself, and with his neighbor. He has "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Php 4:7). The law of God is the way to peace, to happiness, to joy. It is one of God’s greatest gifts to mankind—given to make man happy, to lead him into the full, abundant life, to protect his happiness and lead him into eternal life. All the evil extant in the world today is caused by disobedience to the Creator’s laws.

7. How did Jesus expand the keeping of the Ten Commandments? Matthew 5:21-22,Matthew 5:27-28. Did John understand this principle? 1 John 3:15.Did Paul understand the spiritual aspects of God’s law? Romans 7:14.

COMMENT: Contrary to the belief of some, Jesus came not to do away with the Ten Commandments, but to teach and show by example how to live by the spiritual intent of the law. In Old Testament times God required only a physical, mechanical and visible obedience from the "church." In other words, obedience only in the letter. This, as we know, was because the Old Testament Church of God—the nation of Israel—was not given opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit to help them obey the spiritual intent of the Ten Commandments, as well as the letter of the law. But in New Testament times God has made His Holy Spirit available. He desires that His Spirit-begotten children follow Him in the spirit—the fullness—of His law. To be sure His disciples of all ages understood this new, "magnified" (Isaiah 42:21)style of law keeping, Jesus singled out the commandments barring murder and adultery as vivid examples. He taught that now we are not only to abstain from the physical acts of murder and adultery, but we are also to eschew hatred and adultery in our thoughts as well.

Hatred against another human being is the spirit of murder. Sexual lust is the spirit of adultery. Christ extended the influence of God’s commandments to include our innermost thoughts and attitudes. Let’s notice how the Bible shows this seemingly impossible task can be accomplished, albeit still imperfectly because of our humanity.

8. How did Jesus Christ of Nazareth sum up the great Ten-Commandment Law of God? Matthew 22:36-40.What is the basic characteristic of God’s very nature and character? 1 John 4:16.

COMMENT: The Ten Commandments are expressions of the divine love of God because they reflect the very character of God, which is summarized by the word love. This love, as we learned in the previous lesson, is not just another form of human love, but the divine love that comes directly from God through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Since God is love, Jesus showed that the whole spiritual intent and purpose of God’s law is love. The first four commandments show us how to love God, while the last six of the Ten Commandments show us how to love our neighbor—all fellow human beings.

9. If we possess and exercise God’s Spirit, will the love of God that it imparts enable us to "fulfill"—to obey—God’s spiritual laws? Romans 5:5;Romans 13:10.

COMMENT: The divine love of God imparted to human beings by the Holy Spirit is expressed within the bounds of God’s law—the Ten Commandments. It is manifested first of all in adoration and worship of God and literal obedience to Him; and then in outgoing concern, compassion, kindness and service toward other human beings. The love of God enables us to fulfill the spirit of the law. It was the very tool that Jesus Christ used to intensify, magnify and fulfill the law Himself. As the apostle Paul explained: " ...he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, you shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10,RSV). (More about how God helps us to keep His spiritual laws will be covered later in this lesson.)

10. Could there be any truth whatsoever in the widespread belief that love fulfills the law of God in such a way that the keeping of it is no longer necessary? 1 John 5:2-3;John 14:15;John 15:9-10;2 John 1:5-6.

COMMENT: The apostle John placed a great deal of importance upon love. But never did he or any other inspired writer of Scripture say that love put away, superseded or destroyed the law of God. John, who was a close friend and disciple of Jesus Christ, made it plain that one who truly has the love of God is obeying all of the commandments of God.

11. Is it possible to "earn" one’s salvation through obedience to God? Romans 6:23.And yet, can anyone enter God’s Kingdom as a lawbreaker? Matthew 7:21;Matthew 19:17-19.

COMMENT: A word of qualification is necessary here. We are not saying that you can "earn" your salvation by keeping either the Ten Commandments or any other law of God for that matter. Eternal life is clearly a gift from God! No man or woman could earn it in ten thousand lifetimes of keeping the Ten Commandments! But neither can you enter into eternal life as a lawbreaker! (Romans 6:23.) Jesus Christ plainly and emphatically stated that as Christians we are to endeavor to keep the Ten Commandments with our whole beings and His spiritual help, trusting in Him to mercifully apply His sacrifice in our behalf when and where we fall short, and as we repent (1 John 1:7-9).

"Remember the Sabbath Day" The majority of churches today envision Sunday as having replaced the seventh-day Sabbath. Somehow they have come to assume that the fourth commandment is no longer applicable in what they call the "New Testament Dispensation." Then there are those who feel that it is not necessary to keep any specific day as a Sabbath at all. To them, every day is a "spiritual" Sabbath.

Let’s look directly into the Word of God for the truth about this key commandment.

1. When, how and by whom was the Sabbath "made"? Genesis 2:1-3;Mark 2:28.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ is the "Lord of the Sabbath because He made it! (Recall from our past studies that Christ is the "Lord" of the Old Testament, and the Creator of all things.)

Christ "created" the Sabbath by the act of resting on the seventh day of creation week. He put His divine favor upon and set apart for a special use and purpose a 24-hour period of time that was to occur once every seven days following that first Sabbath.

2. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was specifically made? Mark 2:27.

COMMENT: "The Sabbath was made for man," declared Jesus. It was made far less than a day after man himself was created. The Sabbath was set apart at Creation for the benefit of all mankind. (Since Adam was the first man, he therefore stood as the representative of the whole human race which has descended from him.) 3. How did Christ intend the Sabbath to serve man's needs? Exodus 20:8-11;Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

COMMENT: Notice that God made the seventh day of the week holy—and He commands us to keep it that way. The Sabbath, then, is holy time. And it was made to be a great blessing for all humanity. The word "Sabbath" means "rest" in the original Hebrew. Simple physical and mental rest and refreshment after a grueling work week is an obvious reason for the Sabbath. Human beings need periodic rest and deliverance from the trials and troubles that seem to result from "just living." Man needs a retreat from the normal routine, time off in which to rest and reflect, to be recharged, reenergized and restored physically. But the true meaning and purpose of the Sabbath goes far beyond physical, mental and perhaps even emotional respite. For the seventh-day Sabbath is inextricably interwoven into God's transcendent purpose for creating man in the first place.

Modern man desperately needs this period of time in which to have spiritual union with God. Time in which to think more about God, to worship Him (both in private and in fellowship with others), to meditate upon man's place in the universe and grasp more fully the PURPOSE for his existence.

4. Was the observance of the Sabbath day to be a special "sign" of identification between God and His people Israel? Exodus 31:13-17.

COMMENT: A quick review of a portion of Israel's history is in order at this point. Recall that the Israelites had been the slaves of Egypt for several hundred years. While in Egypt, Israel was forbidden to worship the true God. They were forced to work seven days a week. Consequently, they forgot God's laws and the knowledge of the true Sabbath day which they had received from their progenitors Jacob (renamed Israel), Isaac and Abraham.

After God miraculously delivered Israel from the hands of their cruel taskmasters, He revealed the exact seventh day to them by supplying a double portion of manna on the sixth day of the week (Friday) and withholding it on the seventh day (Saturday), and commanding them to rest on that day (Exodus 16:22-26). (Recall also that the miracle of the manna continued for their entire 40-year sojourn in the wilderness—Exodus 16:35) After revealing the true Sabbath day, God codified the Sabbath commandment at Mount Sinai by including it as one of the ten great commandments which He wrote on two tables of stone. In order that Israel would especially remember that the eternal God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Supreme Ruler over all His creation, God singled out Sabbath observance as the one great "sign" by which they could always be

reminded of who He is, and who they were.

Many other nations had laws which paralleled some of the laws of God. Some had fairly tight moral laws, usually criminal ones (i.e. against murder, stealing). But none had a law requiring them to keep the Creator's Sabbath day. Therefore it was the one law of God which would make Israel stand out. And so God doubly commanded Sabbath observance by making a separate covenant with His people Israel. (The Sabbath was already one of the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses shortly before.) It was to be an everlasting covenant (Exodus 31:16), and would identify the people of God.

Likewise today, the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is one of the "signs" which helps to identify those who compose the true church of God on earth.

5. Doesn't the Bible plainly reveal that a real Christian is one who has become a spiritual Israelite—has become one of Abraham's "seed" through Jesus Christ? Galatians 3:28-29;Romans 4:16;Romans 9:4.

COMMENT: God made the special Sabbath covenant with Abraham's physical "seed." It was to be obeyed throughout their generations. Today, all Spirit-begotten Christians have become Abraham's spiritual "seed" through faith in Christ, and are therefore under. the same obligation to keep the Sabbath day!

6. Was Jesus Christ a Sabbath keeper? Luke 4:16,Luke 4:31.

COMMENT: Jesus regularly attended the local synagogue on the Sabbath in His own town "as His custom was." He met with them in fulfillment of His own command to convoke for worship services every Sabbath day (Leviticus 23:3). This is the day He would obviously observe since He is the One who originally made the Sabbath and ordained that it be kept holy!

7. Is there biblical evidence that the early New Testament church also observed the Sabbath? Acts 13:13-15,Acts 13:42-44;Acts 14:1;Acts 17:1-2;Acts 18:1-11.

8. Was it Paul's "manner" (Acts 17:2), even as it was Christ's "custom" (Luke 4:16), to keep the Sabbath because he felt like it, or because Jesus Christ dwelt in him? Galatians 2:20.Does Christ's will remain the same forever? Hebrews 13:8.

COMMENT: It is quite plain that the apostle Paul observed the Sabbath day. And if Christ lives His life in us today through the Holy Spirit as He did in Paul, then we will also be keeping the same day Jesus and Paul kept!

9. What are all Christians warned in Hebrews 3:8-13?Was rebellion, especially Sabbath breaking, the reason God prevented those ancient Israelites from entering His "rest"? Ezekiel 20:12-13,Ezekiel 20:15-16.

COMMENT: Because Israel had become rebellious and polluted His Sabbaths, God did not allow that generation to enter the Promised Land—a symbolic type of the Kingdom of God. Those Israelites under Moses were on their way to the Promised Land, even as God's Spirit-begotten people today are aiming at the goal of entering into God's Kingdom. That is what the writer is saying in Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4! Let's notice further: The word "rest" in Hebrews 3:11 is

translated from the Greek katapausis and is defined as "rest" or "place of rest." As used in this verse, it denoted for ancient Israel the rest from the rigors of the wilderness by entering the Promised Land. This is a TYPE of the Christian's spiritual rest—being born into the KINGDOM OF GOD—made immortal!

10. Was it primarily because of their unbelief that the Israelites disobeyed, and therefore were prevented from entering God's "rest" for them—the land of Palestine? Hebrews 3:19;Hebrews 4:1-2.

COMMENT: Because the Israelites disbelieved God and therefore lacked faith in Him, they "hardened their hearts." They went on to profane God's Sabbaths when He made that the very testing point ("that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no"—Exodus 16:4); therefore God said of that generation, "They shall not enter my rest." And none, but faithful Joshua and Caleb of that generation, did enter the Promised Land. But the children born along the way during the 40 years did enter with Joshua. God had originally promised this land to Abraham for his descendants, and regardless of Israelite sins, God was bound by His promise.

Notice that before the second generation of Israelites crossed the Jordan River into Palestine Joshua said to the men of three tribes: " ... The Eternal your God bath given you REST, and bath given you this land" (Joshua 1:13).

11. But if New Testament Christians believe, and obey God, may they enter their "rest"—eternal "rest" in God's Kingdom? Hebrews 4:3,first nine words.

COMMENT: The equation is very clear: Real belief in God equals active obedience! If a person truly believes God's Word, he will be obeying it.

12. Will true believers be keeping God's weekly Sabbath day as a symbol of their future rest in God's Kingdom? Hebrews 4:9.

COMMENT: The vital meaning of this verse has been obscured by the King James rendering of the word "rest." Everywhere else in chapters 3 and 4 of the epistle to the Hebrews, the English word "rest" is translated from the Greek word katapausis. However, in Hebrews 4:9, "rest" is translated from the Greek sabbatismos, meaning the keeping of the Sabbath.

So, because of the future "rest" (katapausis)--the Kingdom of God- spiritual Israel is to enter, there remains for them a sabbatismos—a keeping of the Sabbath day. This means that Christians will enter the future "rest" of God's Kingdom even as they now keep the weekly Sabbath which looks forward to it!

Most other translations correctly render Hebrews 4:9 in the English. Even the margin of the King James version renders it: "There remaineth therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God." The Revised Standard Version has it: "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." The Jerusalem Bible: "There must still be, therefore, a place of rest reserved for God's people, the seventh-day rest."

13. What further encouragement are Christians given about entering God's eternal "rest"? Hebrews 4:10-11.Where may they go for the help—the faith--needed to obey God? Hebrews 4:14-16.

COMMENT: Notice how the Revised Standard Version renders Hebrews 4:10-11 : "For whoever enters God’s rest [the Kingdom of God] also ceased from his labors as God did from his [on the seventh day following the six working days of creation]. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience [as did ancient Israel]."

God’s seventh-day Sabbath is not to be treated lightly, for the Sabbath is both a memorial and a shadow. It is a memorial of Creation and a foreshadow of the coming eternal "rest" that Spirit-begotten Christians will enter when born into God’s eternal Family.

14. Did God command the entire nation of Israel to assemble ("convoke") on the Sabbath? Leviticus 23:3.What are New Testament Christians admonished regarding the assembling of themselves? Hebrews 10:25-26.

COMMENT: YOU may be interested to know that as early New Testament Christians assembled together on the Sabbath day, likewise God’s Church in this age assembles for worship services on God’s holy Sabbath. The Worldwide Church of God has congregations all over the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Europe and other parts of the world. Every Sabbath, God’s people meet to receive spiritual instruction and inspiration from the Word of God as expounded by the ministry of His Church (Ephesians 4:11-13).

(The Worldwide Church of God publishes an in-depth booklet on the subject of the Sabbath titled, Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath? Be sure to request it if you have not done so already.)

Lesson 12 - Part 2

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 12 - Part 2 Christianity Is A Way Of Life The Seven Annual Sabbaths

God has a master plan by which He is bringing about the fruition of His awesome purpose for mankind. And His Son, Jesus Christ, plays the central role in God's little-known plan for man. This plan is outlined in the form of seven annual Sabbaths/festivals which Christians are to observe for a vital purpose.

Just as the weekly Sabbath pictures the Christian's goal of entering into eternal "rest" as a glorified, Spirit-born member of God's Family, these annual observances give the step by step overview of the working out of God's plan for man. Not only does each festival picture a great event in God's plan in vivid terms, but the yearly observance of these days by God's people further impresses the knowledge of God's plan on them, and continually reminds them of their part in it.

It was not until the days of Moses that God began to reveal the details of His plan for working out His purpose for mankind. God formally introduced these festivals through Moses to His nation Israel—His "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38).

Since throughout most of human history man has been close to the soil in providing his own food and sustenance, God originally used the yearly agricultural harvests of Palestine as symbolic types of His spiritual harvests of human beings. Today, however, due to large segments of the world's population neither farming nor even living close to agricultural areas, sometimes it is difficult to appreciate, in a spontaneous way, the spiritual analogies and understanding to be derived from these festivals.

Today we can understand from the teachings of Christ and the apostles, that God intends the spring harvest festivals to picture to His Church repeatedly year by year the fact that all of those He has called to become His Spirit-begotten children since Christ's first coming are only the "firstfruits"—only the relatively small beginning of His great spiritual harvest of human beings into His immortal family. Later, as pictured by the festivals of the autumn harvest season, God will call the rest of humanity to salvation! In the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, we find a summary of these festivals. The first three festival periods, beginning with the Passover, are memorials of the first part of God's plan.

They picture the "first-fruits" of God's spiritual harvest. The last four festivals look forward to the future and show how God will reap the latter great autumn spiritual harvest of billions of people. As we commence this introductory study of God's annual festivals and what they signify for modern man, let's notice a few facts from history. The Encyclopaedia Britannica bears witness to the fact that the early New Testament Church of God kept the biblical festivals in a new and different way. "The sanctity of special times [current religious festivals such as Easter and Christmas] was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians, who continued to observe the Jewish festivals [of Leviticus 23:1-44], though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals

had foreshadowed" (vol. 7, p. 859, 14th edition, emphasis ours).

Most Bible commentators and scholars will agree that the many passing references to these annual occasions in the New Testament indicate that in the times and environment of the early church their observance was known, accepted—even taken for granted. Most importantly, Christ and the Church of God customarily kept the annual festivals and their Sabbaths: "In the early Christian Church the propriety of celebrating the festivals together with the whole of the Jewish people was never questioned, so that it needed no special mention" (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1, p. 628).

However, it is obvious from a study of the Bible that God's annual festivals took on a new significance in the apostolic Church and were transformed into Christian celebrations. Jesus Himself played a major role in this by His teaching and example.

1. Who does the Bible say originated these annual festivals and their Sabbaths? Leviticus 23:1-2.

COMMENT: Notice that these are not the "feasts of the Jews" or "feasts of Moses," as some have thought—they are God's own feasts which He originated and gave to His people to keep year by year.

2. Did God specifically say that His annual feasts were to be observed in addition to the weekly Sabbath? Leviticus 23:37-38.

3. What is the first festival to be observed each year? Leviticus 23:5.When did God institute the very first Passover? Exodus 12:1-14.

COMMENT: The festival of the Passover begins God's master plan for mankind. The Passover pictured in advance the great sacrifice—the crucifixion and death—of Jesus Christ ("our Passover lamb"—1 Corinthians 5:7;1 Peter 1:19)for the sins of mankind. After His death, the Passover became a memorial of that sacrifice. Notice:

4. What new way of observing the Passover did Jesus institute shortly before His death as He kept the Passover with His disciples? Luke 22:8,Luke 22:15-20.

COMMENT: While instituting the new symbols of the wine and the bread, picturing His shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins, and His broken body for our physical healing (1 Peter 2:24), Jesus gave a command: "This DO in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The Passover is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice for our sins which He wants Christians to especially "remember" once every year of their lives.

5. What completely new ceremony did Jesus also institute in connection with this New Testament Passover observance? John 13:1-17,especially John 13:14-15.

COMMENT: On the occasion of His "last supper," Jesus left a very significant example for His disciples to follow henceforth. Notice that this ceremony of the washing of His disciples' feet had nothing whatsoever to do with the Old Testament observance of the Passover. It was then being instituted for the very first time by Jesus Christ Himself. He was taking this last-minute opportunity to institute an observance which His disciples in all ages were to keep annually from that time forward!

Foot-washing depicts the attitude of humility and service to others which Christ always exhibited, and which He desires that each Christian strive to imitate (John 13:16-17).

6. What observance follows immediately after the Passover? Leviticus 23:6-8;Exodus 12:15-20.

7. Were the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread holy days on which the people were to assemble themselves, much the same as they would on a weekly Sabbath day? Exodus 12:16;Leviticus 23:7-8.

8. Did New Testament Christians ever observe this festival? 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

What is the obvious meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:6-7.

COMMENT: A study of these passages in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 shows that the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which the Corinthian Christians were observing, pictures the putting away of sin. Leavening, therefore, is a biblical type or symbol for sin (verse 8) because sin, like physical leavening used in bread to make it rise, not only can cause a person to swell with vanity and become puffed up in God’s sight (1 Corinthians 5:2, 1 Corinthians 5:6), but can also spread throughout a group of people.

Paul warned the Church of God at Corinth that they should put out of their fellowship the person who was openly sinning (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul urged decisive action because, as he reminded them, "...a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6). Permitting sin to continue unabated and openly before all the congregation would, in time, cause others to gradually let down and begin slipping back into former sins. Sin would spread into the lives of other Christians by the poor example of just one as certainly as a little leavening in bread dough eventually causes the whole loaf to rise--to become puffed up!

We saw that the Passover is to remind us that Jesus paid a tremendous price for our past sins. He offered something more valuable than anything we could offer—the sacrifice of His perfect, sinless life.

Then the Days of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follow the Passover, remind us that we must strive to put all sins OUT of our lives. This festival pictures putting the leaven of sin away from us and our renewed resolve to live in harmony with God’s laws henceforth. Thus we are to annually rededicate our lives to continual spiritual growth—overcoming the remaining leaven of sin in our lives, and the recurring sins that beset all Christians from time to time.

9. What is the next annual festival that God ordained? Leviticus 23:9-16.Was this another holy day of rest on which the people were to assemble themselves? Leviticus 23:21.

10. What new name was given in the New Testament to this Old Testament festival of "Firstfruits"? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: The term Pentecost means "fifty" in the Greek. This is the only annual Sabbath whose exact calendar date is determined by counting. The first New Testament Pentecost occurred on the fiftieth day after Christ’s resurrection. (For a full explanation of how this day is properly computed, you may write for our free article titled "How to Reckon the Day of Pentecost.")

11. What is the vital meaning of the festival of Pentecost (or "Firstfruits") for New Testament Christians? Acts 1:4-5;Acts 2:38.Are Spirit-begotten Christians the "firstfruits" of God’s great master plan? James 1:18;Romans 8:23.

COMMENT: The New Testament festival of Pentecost is now a memorial which pictures the first arrival of the Holy Spirit from God to beget repentant believers for the first time. This first Pentecost therefore marked the birth of the New Testament Church. It was the first time God made the Holy Spirit available to mankind to this extent.

It was on this first Pentecost that the first of the "firstfruits" of God’s first small spiritual "spring harvest" began to be reaped. These new Christians were begotten by the power that would help them to overcome and grow spiritually, thus preparing them to be born into God’s Family at Christ’s coming.

God knows that for us to overcome our human weaknesses, to be thoroughly and successfully "unleavening" our lives, our puny human willpower and abilities are not enough. We need the supernatural strength of His Holy Spirit. This is the third logical step in God’s master plan intended to help each one of us succeed in our purpose for living.

12. What is the next festival, or annual "Sabbath," of the seven described in Leviticus? Leviticus 23:23-24.

COMMENT: The Day of Trumpets primarily depicts the triumphant return of the powerful living Christ to set up the Kingdom of God on earth (Revelation 11:15). You will remember that the first resurrection occurs at the second coming of Jesus Christ which is announced by the blast of a trumpet (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17;1 Corinthians 15:52).

13. Does the overall meaning of the Feast of Trumpets encompass more than the second coming of Christ? Revelation 8:1-2,Revelation 8:6;Revelation 10:7.

COMMENT: Notice that it is the Feast of Trumpets, plural (Leviticus 23:24), not just the "Feast of the Last Trump." When ancient Israel was wandering in the wilderness, they became accustomed to the blowing of trumpets for many purposes: the calling of assemblies, the signal to march or halt, "officer’s call," or as a warning. Much like the use of bugles in the military, ancient Israel came to recognize various sounds as having specific meaning.

There is a parallel between trumpets sounding alarms of warning in ancient Israel and the function of the Work of God today (Isaiah 58:1). There is also a relationship between the angelic trumpet blasts, signaling the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and the continual warning and witness conducted by God’s Work today which is preparing the way for the return of Christ. The successive angelic trumpet blasts and accompanying cataclysmic events on a worldwide scale just prior to Christ’s return will serve as final warnings to a heedless, sin-ravaged world!

14. What annual Sabbath follows only nine days after the Feast of Trumpets? Leviticus 23:26-32;Leviticus 16:2-34,especially Leviticus 16:29-31.

COMMENT: The rituals required of the Old Testament Levitical ministry on the Day of Atonement are described in great detail in Leviticus 16:1-34. Suffice it to say here that the live goat, upon whom all the sins of Israel were to be confessed, and which was led into the desolate wilderness,

represents the restraining of the Devil upon whom the guilt of all the sins of mankind will be laid after Jesus Christ returns.

Satan, who is called the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and is described as the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), being the father of sin (John 8:42-44), will be restrained by Christ from further deceiving and leading the masses of mankind into sin. No longer will he be able to "broadcast" his attitudes of vanity, lust, and greed into people's minds. At the Devil's "chaining" (Revelation 20:1-3), the symbolism of Leviticus 16:1-34 will have become reality. The minds of men, formerly closed tight by Satan and his demon cohorts, will now at last be opened by the Spirit of God, and all humanity will readily accept and receive forgiveness of their sins through Christ. They will be able for the first time to understand God's master plan of salvation for them. Then, and only then, will mankind become "at one" with Christ and the Father, as symbolized by the Day of At-one-ment.

15. How are we to observe the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 23:32.

COMMENT: The Day of Atonement is perhaps the most unusual holy day as far as what God expects us to do during it is concerned. For it is the one day on which God has commanded us to fast—to "afflict our souls" or bodies. (For biblical proof that afflicting one's soul means to fast, compare the following passages: Psalms 35:13;Psalms 69:10;Isaiah 58:3;Ezra 8:21.)

What, exactly, is fasting? What is its purpose? The purpose of fasting is to humble oneself—to help us to see ourselves as we really are. And to see God as He is.

Fasting on the Day of Atonement means denying oneself food and water for 24 hours—from sunset to sunset (or evening to evening—Leviticus 23:32). Fasting is not penance—not a hunger strike to try to get one's way with God. A Christian is to fast in order to humble his or her own fleshly mind with its carnal will, and to draw closer to God and His righteous way (Isaiah 58:6-11).

Thus fasting on the Day of Atonement is a vivid reminder of the state of mind necessary for salvation—of the humility, the godly sorrow, the earnest seeking for God's way—a condition to which this world will have been brought by the catastrophic events culminating in the return of Jesus Christ!

16. What important seven-day festival and integral annual Sabbath day follows the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 23:33-35;Deuteronomy 16:13.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the "Feast of Ingathering" (Exodus 23:16;Exodus 34:22)because this seven-day festival fell just after the autumn harvest season. The whole nation observed this feast after the final, main harvest was in (Leviticus 23:39).

17. Did Jesus keep the Feast of Tabernacles? John 7:2,John 7:8-11, John 7:14. Did everyone know that Jesus always kept God's feasts and was certain to be in Jerusalem for its observance? John 7:11.

COMMENT: Because of continually mounting persecution, Jesus wisely chose not to travel openly in Judea (John 7:1). However, John 7:1-10 show that He did risk His life to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Even though He went secretly, He openly taught in the temple during the middle of the Feast (John 7:14).

18. What is the divinely set theme for the yearly observance of the Feast of Tabernacles? Deuteronomy 16:14-15.(Notice the words "surely rejoice." Other translations render this "be altogether joyful.") Does God intend for everyone—regardless of age, social strata or economic level—to rejoice in this feast? Deuteronomy 16:14.

19. Does God intend for a man to take his wife and children to rejoice with him at the Feast of Tabernacles? Deuteronomy 16:14;Deuteronomy 12:5,Deuteronomy 12:7, Deuteronomy 12:12. Are they to live in "booths"—temporary dwellings (corresponding to motel and hotel rooms, lodges, etc., today)--at the place designated for the observance of this feast? Leviticus 23:42,Leviticus 23:40.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles is full of spiritual meaning for Christians today. Simply put, the Feast of Tabernacles portrays for us the wonderful World Tomorrow under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ--1,000 years of peace, prosperity and joy for the billions of mankind who will live in this utopian age. It is during the Millennium that the great "autumn harvest" of human lives will begin to be gathered into the Kingdom of God—born again as divine members of the Family of God.

Just think of it! Satan will have been immediately deposed at Christ’s return. Then there will follow one thousand years of peace and prosperity. Those who are the "firstfruits" of God’s spiritual harvest—first born into God’s Family and co-heirs with Jesus Christ—will join Him in ruling this earth. They will be given the privilege of bringing saving knowledge to every human then alive.

New generations will be born in the Millennium, and humans will soon again number billions! Perhaps these could be called "second fruits," for each will live a life of overcoming as Christians today will have lived.

Over and over God tells us that the Feast of Tabernacles is a time of exceedingly great rejoicing. For ancient Israel it was a time of rejoicing because the abundant winter’s store was taken in just before the Feast. But in the Millennium, the happiness, joy and prosperity pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles will come about universally under the enlightened rule of Jesus Christ. Obedience to the spiritual principles of God’s laws and God’s revealed way of life will make the World Tomorrow a gloriously happy place.

God’s great autumn festival gives His Spirit-begotten children today freedom to think on His purpose and how to fulfill it. The Feast of Tabernacles is intended to separate and free them from the world. Dwelling in temporary habitations for an entire week away from their everyday surroundings, away from their jobs, their customary thoughts, and most negative influences, they picture by their observance of these seven days the universal freedom and peace of the Millennium. The Feast of Tabernacles as observed today is actually a tiny, but happy, foretaste of the joyful World Tomorrow when the Spirit of God will lead every human. These are days of concentrated teaching by God’s ministers—days of continuous, genuine Christian fellowship. Christians at the Feast demonstrate now, by the way they live together in harmony, what this whole sin-sick, unhappy world COULD and WILL be like!

Worldwide Church of God members enthusiastically look forward to observing the Feast of Tabernacles every autumn at one of dozens of festival sites located throughout the world. Outstanding convention sites are leased by the Church in the United States, Canada, the British

Isles, Europe, Australia and other countries of the free world (and even in one iron curtain country!) to enable brethren to meet for services during this seven-day festival. Between services, members also participate in various exciting, fun-filled church-sponsored activities for young and old alike, as well as other special attractions which are unique to each site. The sincere concern and fellowship, the spiritual nourishment and just plain good fun whets one's appetite for the next year's feast, making the ordinary "vacations" of the past seem humdrum by comparison!

20. But does the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles mark the end of God's plan for humanity? Isn't it God's will that all who have ever lived should come to the knowledge of salvation? 2 Peter 3:9;1 Timothy 2:4.

COMMENT: Thus far we have seen how those who have been privileged to be called of God through the ages, especially from the first coming of Christ up unto the end of the Millennium, fit into God's marvelous master plan. But what about the billions of people from the time of Adam down to our time (including perhaps most of your loved ones) who were not called of God?

Billions have never even heard the name of Christ, let alone heard of God's great plan of salvation! What of the millions under atheistic Communism? Are they doomed to eternal death, never even having had a chance to hear the truth? Would this be fair of a loving God? Can you imagine a merciful and just God condemning innocent little children—some of whose lives may have been cut short before they could either walk or talk—to remain dead for all eternity without the knowledge of God's happy way of life?

How, then, are they to learn of salvation? The answer is revealed in the final step in God's master plan.

God has, in His fairness, planned for everyone who has ever lived—men, women and children—to receive the very same opportunity for salvation you are being given. Just as the week is not complete without the Sabbath day, so God's master plan is not complete without God's seventh annual holy day.

Seven in the Bible is a number signifying completion and perfection. Without the knowledge of this seventh annual holy day, you can't understand the perfection of God's master plan—that God's mercy to mankind extends even beyond the Millennium! In order to understand this final phase—the windup—of God's plan, we must understand the last of God's annual holy days, symbolizing the Last Great Judgment.

21. Was there an "eighth day" of worship held immediately following the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles? Leviticus 23:36.Is it the final festival—the final annual Sabbath of rest? Leviticus 23:39.

COMMENT: The last annual High Sabbath is observed immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. But because of its close proximity to this feast, it naturally was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and was called the "eighth day." In the New Testament it is referred to as the "last day, that great day of the feast" (John 7:37).

22. Revelation 20:1-15 holds the key to the meaning of the "Last Great Day." As we already know, Revelation 20:4-6 essentially speak of the resurrected saints ruling with Jesus Christ on earth for 1,000 years. But exactly what is said in the first sentence of Revelation 20:5?

COMMENT: These are not "the dead in Christ," but simply—the dead— those billions who are not Christ's—who have never been begotten and converted, who may never have even heard the name of Jesus Christ.

Note that the first part of verse 5 in the King James Version is in reality a parenthetical expression. Here's how it should read: "(But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection." The sentence, "This is the first resurrection," refers to the resurrection of the righteous dead in Christ just before the 1,000 years. "But," John makes clear, "the rest of the dead"—those who never had a chance to understand God's truth—would not come up in a resurrection "until the thousand years were finished." This resurrection—after the 1,000 years are finished—is the second resurrection in time order.

23. How does John further elaborate on the second resurrection? Revelation 20:11-13.How are these people judged? Revelation 20:12.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated "books" in Revelation 20:12 is biblia, and it is from this exact word that we derive our English word "bible." Check it in your dictionary. The "books" that are opened are the books of the Bible! They will be opened to the understanding of the billions of people who have never yet heard the name of Christ or been able to understand the true message of God's Word—those who have never before been able to participate in God's master plan of salvation. This is the same outpouring of the spirit of understanding—of "living waters"—that Jesus Christ referred to on that last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles! (John 7:37-39.)

24. How did Jesus refer to this special "day," or period of judgment for peoples who have yet to hear the wonderful message of salvation? Matthew 10:15;Matthew 11:20-24;Matthew 12:41-42.

25. Where else in the Bible is this resurrection to judgment described? Ezekiel 37:1-14.Are these dead clearly raised to physical human life—again to have corruptible human bodies made of flesh and bone—to rely on air to sustain their physical existence? Ezekiel 37:5-10.

26. What is God's promise to these resurrected peoples? Ezekiel 37:13-14. Isn't this obviously the same outpouring of God's Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ spoke about in His enigmatic sermon on the "last great day" of the Feast of Tabernacles? John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: Recall in Matthew 10:1-42, Matthew 11:1-30 and Matthew 12:1-50 that Christ first mentioned the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrha. Then in order: Tyre and Sidon, Sodom again, Nineveh in Jonah's time, and finally the Queen of Sheba. All of these examples (people who lived in different generations) are compared to the citizens living in the cities and towns of Jesus' generation (the vast majority of whom did not understand or believe Christ's message). Jesus tells us that they all are to be resurrected with the generation that lived during His time on earth!

Jesus gave enough representative examples of generations of people living at widespread and different times in human history to substantiate the fact that most of humanity will be alive, together, at the same time on this earth. There will be pre-Flood men and women, all twelve tribes of Israel, those who lived during the Middle or Dark Ages, etc., and everyone living even now who will not have had the opportunity to come to Christ simply because they were not called by God to receive their opportunity for salvation during their lifetime. (See John 6:44,John 6:65) This group includes all people of all times everywhere on this earth, excepting, of course, those who will be

born of God in the first resurrection—or those relatively few incorrigibly wicked people who will be resurrected in the third resurrection to have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second and final death (Revelation 20:14-15).

If many of the ancient peoples described in Matthew's gospel would have repented, as Christ Himself said they would have if He had personally come to them in their day; they will most surely repent when resurrected after He has already ruled for a thousand years on an earth dominated by peace, prosperity and well-being. This vast resurrection to mortal life opens their period of judgment— not sentencing. (Sentencing is merely the final act in the process of judgment.) A decision must be rendered based on how each individual responds to the Word of God. (This same "judgment" is now upon Christians who have been begotten by God's Holy Spirit today—1 Peter 4:17.) And since every individual will have the fullest single opportunity for salvation, each will in effect be rendering their own verdict by the choices they make while living during this period of "judgment." But if you become a Christian now in this age, and if you remain faithful unto death, you will be privileged to partake of a "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35)at Christ's second coming. It's better simply because you have the opportunity to receive a greater reward than those who will live the Christian life during the last judgment period, or even those who will have lived during the Millennium! (More about your potential "reward" a little later in this lesson.)

We have seen that all of God's annual Sabbaths/festivals are built around the annual harvest seasons in Palestine. But it is the spiritual harvest that God is interested in! Old Testament Israel was reminded of their dependence upon, and relationship to, Almighty God by this seasonal cycle of harvest festivals. Now God's faithful New Testament Christians can receive the vital lifesaving knowledge of God's master plan for His spiritual harvest through the observance of these SAME DAYS!

What one wants to remember, he must review regularly. As Spirit-begotten Christians observe each annual festival in its season, they are reminded of God's master plan for the salvation of all mankind, and their individual part in it. God's annual holy days give one the opportunity to "act out," in a sense, the purpose for which he or she was born.

Through the years, God's church has grown in the understanding of the spiritual meaning of these annual holy days. Unlike the world's holidays which show no practical purpose or plan whatsoever for human existence, God's annual Sabbaths/festivals reveal the full scope and meaning of His great purpose for mankind. In this introductory study we learned that God's annual Sabbaths and their related festivals not only teach us His plan of salvation, they point us directly to our Savior Jesus Christ. He is "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

It is by "putting on" Christ that we put sin out of our lives, as pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Christ is the first of the "firstfruits," and it was after His resurrection that He sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was sent to spiritually beget those whom the Father would call, thus enabling them to fulfill His law, successfully overcome sin in their lives, and grow spiritually.

It is Christ who is going to intervene in world affairs, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets and become King of kings and Lord of lords, putting down the despotic rule of man and Satan, the arch

deceiver, as portrayed by the Day of Atonement. With the influence of the devil and his demons now gone, all mankind will have opportunity to become "at one" with Christ through baptism and the receipt of the Holy Spirit.

Christ is coming to set up His government in the Millennium, making this earth a veritable utopia—pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles. Billions will be born into the Family of God during this golden age. His people, which the Bible terms "saints," are now preparing the way for, and are representatives of, that Kingdom by following in Christ's footsteps.

Finally, Christ shall make salvation available to everyone who ever lived, but never heard or understood the truth, in the last great step—the Last Great Day picturing the last judgment period—in His plan. This will be the conclusion of His personal sacrifice as the Savior of mankind.

God's church today has retained the precious truth concerning His master plan and purpose here on earth for you! Around the world God's true church—composed of converted, Spirit-begotten children of God—is faithfully observing all of God's festivals every year.

(For a more detailed explanation of these annual Sabbaths/festivals, please write for our two free booklets titled Holidays or God's Holy Days--Which? and How Often Should We Observe the Lord's Supper?) Tithing and Giving in a New Spirit

We have seen that the weekly Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths/festivals, and many other Old Testament laws, are now observed by Christians with a new and different spirit and approach (Matthew 5:21-22,Matthew 5:27-28). We are about to see that God's law of tithing also takes on new meaning today. Remember the apostle Paul wrote that "... We are able ministers of the new testament [or the New Covenant]" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Christianity is a way of life. It has everything to do with the way we live our daily lives—our day-in, day-out association with others, our business practices—even the way we handle our money.

Remember that God is Creator, Owner, and Proprietor of everything we see around us. God therefore has a prior claim to ownership of all that has been produced out of the earth. As David wrote: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalms 24:1). All the gold and silver belongs to God (Haggai 2:8). God created everything and by virtue of that creation He owns it all—including mankind. There is really no way that we can "reimburse" God for what He has done for us as our Creator. So why give a tithe of our increase to God?

Tithing is a part of God's "give way" of life. God wants us to learn how to give and share for the good of others, and for our own good!

God uses the tenth He claims for Himself for proclaiming to the world His gospel of peace, joy, happiness, prosperity and eternal life. For lack of this knowledge, the world has been under a curse!

God's law concerning what we produce and earn can be compared to a contract. He wants us to understand that we are working with Him in a partnership. God allows us to live and work on His earth—to cultivate the land and produce the food we eat. He allows us to cut down His timber and build the houses we live in, and to use all His resources in producing thousands of products for our

own use. But God is a very generous partner. He basically reserves only 10 percent for His Work on earth. In the Garden of Eden, God reserved just one tree for Himself. That remained His. He never gave that one tree to Adam and Eve for their use. They had no right to eat of its fruit. When they, filled with greed to possess all, reached out and took the fruit of that forbidden tree, they sinned—they STOLE from God.

Today, the same Satan that deceived Eve would gladly have you believe that all of your income—or all the produce of your land—is yours. But don't you believe it! Let's understand what the Bible has to say about tithing.

1. How did the patriarch Abraham honor the Creator, Owner and Sovereign over all things? Genesis 14:17-20;Hebrews 7:1-4.To what extent did God bless obedient Abraham? Genesis 13:2.

COMMENT: Abraham was a tither. He gave a tenth part of the spoils of battle to God. The context of these verses in Genesis clearly shows that God received His due before any further disposition of the goods to others was made. Abraham thus acknowledged that God was the source of all his blessings.

Abraham became an exceedingly prosperous man because he was mightily blessed of God. And the biblical record shows he continued to be obedient to God for the rest of his life (Genesis 26:5).

2. Was Melchizedek God's priest? Genesis 14:18;Hebrews 7:1-3.

COMMENT: Tithing is revealed in the Bible as God's system for financing His earthly ministry. Prior to the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic dispensation, the ministry was that of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was God's representative on earth and He received the tithes from God's faithful servants at that time.

Melchisedec, "...having neither beginning of days, nor end of life... abideth a priest continually" (Hebrews 7:3). Yes, He probably was High Priest even from the time of Adam! And the ancient patriarchs financed this ministry of God on earth by the tithing system.

3. What did Jacob promise God he would do with all his increase? Genesis 28:20-22.Was he prospered? Genesis 30:43.

COMMENT: Jacob promised to give God the tithe of his increase from that time forward. Over the years of his life God did bless him a great deal because of his faithfulness; there was hardly enough space in the country for all his cattle. Jacob apparently continued as a life-long tither, never forgetting the One who had caused him to prosper (Genesis 48:15).

4. Before the time of Moses, the tithe had been paid directly to Melchizedek. But after Israel's deliverance from Egypt, who did God say was to receive the tithe? Numbers 18:21,Numbers 18:24. To whom were the Levites themselves to pay a tithe of their income (of the tithes they received from the people)? Numbers 1:1-28.

COMMENT: God had set Aaron's family in highest authority over the Levites (verses 2-3, 6), so the priests received a tithe from the income of all the other Levites.

5. What different use was to be made of this tithe for that time? Numbers 18:21.

COMMENT: Melchizedek, the member of the Godhead who became Jesus Christ (write for the free article which proves the true identity of Melchizedek), selected the Levites to be His ministers. God's ministry through the Levitical priesthood was a material, ritualistic ministry of reminding a carnal nation of their failure to obey His laws (Jeremiah 7:22-24). So Christ (Melchizedek) ordained a change in the tithing law—He turned the tenth He had always personally received over to the Levites for their support. Christ thereby transferred receipt of the tithe to the Levitical priesthood for their support. But there was no spreading of the gospel worldwide at that time. God's plan for that dispensation merely called for the Levites to teach the people the law in the letter, and to administer the physical rituals and sacrifices. And the people were commanded to bring their tithes to them.

Hebrews chapter seven clearly shows that tithing had long been an ongoing financial principle by the time God formally instituted ancient Israel's civil law through Moses and made tithing a law. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that tithing is not Levitical (of the descendants of Levi) or "ceremonial" (see verses 5, 8-10). It did not begin with the administration of the Levites and therefore is not ended now that there is no longer a Levitical priesthood extant in the world. Rather, according to verses 11-17 of Hebrews seven, God changed the priesthood back to the spiritual priesthood of Melchizedek. The Levitical Priesthood was superseded by the priesthood of Jesus Christ—the Melchizedek priesthood restored! And so there was also a change as to who should now receive the tithe (verse 12). Christ has authorized His New Testament ministry to accept the tithes in order to do the spiritual Work of God! The New Testament era was ushered in when Melchizedek (Christ), who abides as our High Priest continually (Hebrews 7:5;Hebrews 4:14-16), became a mortal man so He could be sacrificed for the sins of all mankind and make the Holy Spirit available to those whom God calls.

Christ came to this earth to inaugurate a NEW kind of ministry—a spiritual ministry. It is a ministry of SALVATION—a ministry of PROPHECY--a ministry of WARNING, as well as GOOD NEWS.

Christ's commission to all His true ministers is, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20). And, referring to our day, He said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [of the age] come" (Matthew 24:14).

Jesus Christ came to qualify as the Ruler of this world. And He came to train messengers who would proclaim to an unbelieving and slumbering world His soon return to establish the government of God on earth. Christ personally chose His original twelve apostles, or ministers, to carry on the work He began. Today the true ministers of Jesus Christ are to perform an even GREATER WORK for this end time! But which church today is carrying out Christ's commission? Do you know? Jesus said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). And He did build it! Have you found it?

Jesus Christ established one church—not hundreds of differing, disagreeing denominations. One church which was to carry on the work He began. That church first comprised His apostles and disciples whom He empowered with His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). And Christ's true church has continued through the ages until this very day!

Somewhere on earth today are the true ministers of God. As the end of this age approaches, they will be carrying out Christ's commission with POWER. They are making plain the GOOD NEWS of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Without fear or favor, they are explaining the laws of that Kingdom. And they are making plain and clear the hundreds of prophecies referring directly to this end time. In these critical, chaotic days approaching the end of an age, the carrying on of God's true ministry is a worldwide mission which is reaching MILLIONS of people. It is a huge undertaking and it requires not only the financing of the personal needs of hundreds of ministers and other laborers, but the employing of tremendous facilities for proclaiming Jesus' world-shaking gospel of the Kingdom of God UNTO ALL NATIONS! And these high-powered facilities that have been made available for His purpose—radio and television stations and printing presses which reach vast multitudes of people never before possible in any past age—cost a great deal of money!

Today, God has provided for the financing of His powerful spiritual ministry by the same system He has used for millennia—the tithing system.

6. Does the Bible show that both nations and individuals can literally "steal" from God directly? Malachi 3:7-12.

COMMENT: Can anyone afford to rob God? Stealing from God is a very serious matter! It would be sheer folly to toss it off with a casual shrug of the shoulders as if God does not notice.

Although tithing is giving a tenth of one's income, you cannot give "your" tithe, in this sense: It is not yours to give—it already belongs to God. He has put a "no-trespassing" sign on it; it is the first tenth which He has reserved unto Himself. It is only after we acknowledge God's prior claim over that first tenth of our income that we have legitimate claim to the other nine-tenths.

7. What does one come under when he or she breaks this fundamental financial law of God? Malachi 3:9.

COMMENT: Does anyone who lives in America, or Britain, or Australia doubt that these Western nations are, in fact, under some horrible curse in spite of their comparative wealth? It's almost a contradiction in terms— blessings and cursings at the same time—yet news of our latest financial debacles are regular headlines in the United States, Britain and other English-speaking countries in the Western world.

8. What is God's simple solution to our financial problems? Malachi 3:10.Does He challenge us to put Him to the test—to "prove" Him—to see if He really will bless us? Same verse.

COMMENT: God does not offer us complex, hard to be understood solutions to our financial problems and curses. The simple equation is: Give to God what is His and He will reward us with blessings.

God has a thousand ways of making what you do pay off bigger. If you work diligently, and are faithful in giving Him His portion, He works with you, blesses your effort, causes your partnership with Him to produce and earn more!

Those who faithfully give God His tenth find that the 90 percent that is left seems to go further than the 100 percent ever did before. Thousands of Worldwide Church of God members, and

co-workers in this great Work of God, have remarked that there seems to be an unwritten law which cannot be put down in a budget—a law that causes their money to always stretch further when they tithe faithfully. (Read the following scriptures in connection with this principle: 1 Kings 17:8-23;2 Kings 4:1-7;2 Kings 4:42-44; Matthew 14:17-21;Matthew 15:34-38;Hebrews 13:8.) At the same time, by giving the tenth which God reserves for Himself, people become more conscious of their money—they budget and plan more carefully, and waste less of their incomes.

9. What should be our attitude in giving God the tenth that belongs to Him, and even an occasional offering as we are able? 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

COMMENT: A generous attitude is foundational to God’s "give" way of life. God is a generous giver! He hopes that His children will reflect a like generosity, within their limited means. The apostle Paul made this crystal clear: "The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7,RSV). The giving principle is elsewhere stated in the pages of the Bible. Jesus showed that a giving spirit brings an automatic boomerang-like effect. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

Solomon reiterates the very same axiom in his writings: "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2,RSV). God’s blessing WILL come in God’s own time and God’s own way. Again, "One man gives freely, yet grows richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. A liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered" (Proverbs 11:24-25,RSV).

All of these verses just repeat in different words, the time-tested principle restated by many writers throughout the Bible: "What you sow you shall reap" (Galatians 6:7).

10. In what way did Jesus uphold the principle of tithing? Matthew 23:23.Notice the last part of the verse.

COMMENT: Isn’t that rather clear? Jesus said that spiritual qualities such as judgment, love, mercy and faith are more important than carefully and strictly paying tithes on every little plant that might grow in your garden—especially when that strictness led to self-righteousness. But Christ said "not to leave the other undone"—not to fail to pay your full tithe as God requires.

11. Is tithing a kind of worship, as well as an expression of faith toward God? Hebrews 11:6.

COMMENT: Tithing is much akin to prayer. Prayer to God is an offering of one’s deepest heartfelt intent coupled with thanksgiving and gratitude. Tithing and the giving of our material substance are exactly in the same category. It is an act of worship to God—a demonstration of love, gratitude, respect, honor and esteem for the Creator—a sign of submission to the will of God, an acknowledgment of His lordship and dominion.

Tithing, like prayer, is an act of faith in God. As such, it is the heart and core of what Christianity and conversion are all about. Tithing is a deeply personal act of worship when done in faith. It is an acknowledgment that God is there—that He REALLY EXISTS—and that He is able to "supply all

your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19).

There is simply no way anyone can prevent God from blessing those who step out on faith and tithe to their Creator. Experience has proved there is an automatic blessing for being obedient to our great eternal God if that obedience is coupled with faith.

Remember that you tithe to God, not to any man! You are recognizing, when you give God His tithe, that He has placed a prior claim on your income. You are recognizing that He EXISTS, and that He is a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him"! Yes, tithing is an act of faith—a spiritual act, like prayer—and without faith, it is impossible to please God. But suppose someone says, "I have no confidence in the way the tithe will be used." May he therefore refuse to give his tithe or stipulate exactly by whom or for what purpose it will be used? Let’s understand. The individual’s responsibility is to pay God’s tithe to those whom he has proved to be doing God’s Work. Deciding how the tithe is to be used or spent once it is given is not his responsibility. That is God’s responsibility. It is God’s tithe and it is up to Him to direct how His servants use the money.

12. Should Christians be "fellow-helpers" to the truth? 3 John 1:8. Are they "fellow-laborers" in spreading the gospel? Php 4:3;1 Corinthians 3:9;2 Corinthians 6:1.

COMMENT: The amazing growth in the power and effectiveness of the Worldwide Church of God over the years has been possible only through the combined efforts of thousands whom Jesus Christ has called to help financially support His Work through their tithes and offerings. In the earlier years of God’s church, only a handful of people could be reached with the gospel. But as the number of dedicated members and co-workers who voluntarily sent tithes and offerings increased, so has the scope and power of God’s Work.

Money is a storehouse of value. It can be used selfishly or it can add power and increased effectiveness to the Church of God so it can fulfill His commission. It is by the collective efforts of many whom God has called to share in the glorious opportunity to be "fellow-laborers" that makes it possible for this world to hear and read the true gospel of Christ today. Even the expense of printing and mailing this course of Bible study was made possible by the tithes and offerings given to God’s Work.

God’s "tithe" is that 10 percent which He reserves for Himself. And yet, it is actually spent wholly for man’s benefit—in bringing the knowledge of the blessings of God’s government to mankind!

God’s way is to give—without charge—His truth to any and all who will ask. By involving His "fellow-laborers" in this awesome commission, they share in the blessing of bringing others into the Family of God.

Truly it is "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). By honoring God with our substance, our own material needs will be supplied, for God promises: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" [Matthew 6:33).

Christ gave His disciples (and us also, if we seek to follow His ways) a precious spiritual principle. He said: "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:20-21). If you will invest a tenth of your income in the Work of God, you will find that your own interest in the things of God will develop and grow. And as your involvement in the great work of this church develops, and you nurture it with prayer and study to

know God’s will for your life, you will be overcoming and growing in the very character of Jesus Christ: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

Why not make your investment an eternal investment? Make God your financial partner. Put your heart and God’s tithe into the work that He is doing; the work of warning all nations of impending global troubles; the Work that is publishing the message of the GOOD NEWS of tomorrow’s world—a world that will at last be living under the loving guidance of our Creator God.

Why not "prove" God?

Lesson 12 - Part 3

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 12 - Part 3 Christianity Is A Way Of Life The Christian Fight! The Word of God tells us that all who will follow the Christian way of life will have to face three deadly enemies. These three enemies tend to discourage us from overcoming sin and developing the very character of Christ.

These deadly foes tend to lead us away from faith in God, from relying on God, from walking with God. They can come between us and God—divide us from Him. They tend to put wedges into our minds that will grow and grow, separating us from the guidance and power of God's Holy Spirit.

God says these deadly enemies must be defeated and He tells us how to do it!

1. Does Paul show there is effort involved in living the Christian life— that eternal life is worth fighting for so as not to let it slip from one's grasp? 1 Timothy 6:12;1 Timothy 1:18-19.Whose "soldier" was Timothy? 2 Timothy 2:3-4.

2. Did Paul steadfastly follow God's way of life—did he know, shortly before his death, that he had WON the Christian fight? 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

3. Is the Christian's warfare against physical armies? Or is it a spiritual warfare? 2 Corinthians 10:3-4.Just what is it that a Christian is to fight against? 2 Corinthians 10:5.

COMMENT: The first enemy in the Christian's daily warfare is his own "human nature" with its inordinate lusts (Galatians 5:19-21). This nature in us rationalizes cleverly, sometimes producing deceitful and degrading impulses—vanity, lust, greed, etc. We are enticed to sin, to break God's spiritual law, thus cutting us off from Him. Our nature can destroy us spiritually, unless we resist its wrong impulses.

4. What is the second deadly enemy of all Christians? Is it the world around us? Galatians 1:4.What should be a Christian's attitude toward the world's social order with its glitter, glamour, status-seeking, and alluring appeal? 1 John 2:15-17.

COMMENT: John is speaking about this worldly system around us—this "cosmos." It is from the original Greek word Cosmos, translated "world" in 1 John 2:15,that English words such as cosmopolitan, cosmography, cosmopolite, etc. are derived.

John was referring to the societies of this world, so much of which are literally built on and motivated by the vanity, lusts, and greed of human nature. Because most people have been deceived (Revelation 12:9), they don't understand how so many of the world's ways could be wrong in God's sight. Nevertheless, this world's ways do bombard Christians continually with temptations which can seduce them from following Christ!

5. Should Christians strive to avoid the evil that is in the world? 2 Corinthians 6:14-18;Revelation 18:4.Does this mean that any who would love God and seek to live the Christian way of life should therefore move away from populated areas? John 17:15-18.Notice especially the first part of John

17:15.

COMMENT: Christ’s prayer in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of John shows that God does not expect Christians to move to the mountains and deserts to escape the world’s distractions! Rather, they should strive to be separate spiritually and abstain from its ways that are defined as sin in the Bible. From earliest childhood we conformed to the customs and practices which we learned from the teachings and examples of others. We merely accepted without question most of the practices and lifestyles of the society around us. But as we learn about God’s way, we are to conscientiously apply ourselves to the new life in Christ. "Be not conformed to this world," said Paul, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Unless we cease from conforming to those ways of this world which are contrary to God’s will, we will not grow in the character of Christ or overcome spiritually. The many snares in the world could be compared to an obstacle course which challenges and strengthens a good soldier in training. Christians must learn to hurdle those obstacles.

6. Do people always appreciate the person who tries to live according to God’s law? 1 Peter 4:3-4;John 15:18-20;John 16:33.How should a Christian respond to those who might be antagonistic toward his life in Christ? Matthew 5:43-47;Romans 12:20-21.

COMMENT: God does not want us to hate the people in the world, even though some may attempt to persecute and ridicule us for following God’s way. Since they are potential Sons of God, we are instructed to love them! Someday, perhaps because of our Christian examples of genuine concern, service and compassion for people in general, some of them, too, may turn to God and be converted (Matthew 5:14-16). Nevertheless, eventually God will open their minds and show them His glorious truth so they can become Christians too, as is depicted by the last step in God’s master plan.

7. What, or who, is the third great enemy of every Christian? 1 Peter 5:8-9;James 4:7.Isn’t Satan the devil ultimately responsible for inspiring the inordinate characteristics of human nature and for all the evil in this world? 2 Corinthians 4:4;Ephesians 2:2.Has he indeed deceived the whole world? Revelation 12:9.

COMMENT: Satan, the devil, formerly the great archangel Lucifer who was originally created perfect in his ways (Ezekiel 28:15), acquired his satanic nature by his own reasoning and choice. As we learned in Lesson 9, humans have in turn acquired Satan’s nature from early childhood and we call it "human nature." Notice how Paul described this natural frame of mind: "... the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). But once the Holy Spirit of God is added to a person’s mind, he then has the power to resist the attitudes of self-centeredness, lust, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, resentment, competition, strife, bitterness, and hate which are broadcast to the mind by Satan. No person is compelled to respond to and obey these impulses from Satan. The devil has no power to FORCE anyone to think or do wrong! But the unsuspecting automatically do so without realizing what is taking place in their minds. Most people just drift along, responding to emotions and impulses which often find expression in their fleshly drives and vain pursuits.

Thus Satan, the "god of this world," the "prince of the power of the air," is actually working in the unsuspecting all over the world today. That is why it is "this present evil world," and why it is so thoroughly deceived today!

8. After your begettal by God's Holy Spirit which makes you a Christian, will the devil try to beguile you again—to deceive your mind—and lead you away from Christ and His ways? 2 Corinthians 11:2-4.Did some in Paul's day begin to fall victim to the devil's promptings once again? 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 1:6-8;Galatians 3:1.

COMMENT: Conversion does not disconnect Satan's wavelength. He continues to broadcast the attitudes of his nature. When Jesus spoke of overcoming, He referred to overcoming these ways of Satan, which are contrary to God's way.

It seems that few, even among converted Christians, fully realize the supreme need to be constantly aware of Satan's efforts to get them to turn from God's way of government back to his way. Those who have turned from his way are fighting to OVERCOME his subtle urgings, and are striving to remain true to God's way—the way of God's government. They are the ones Satan hates. He is especially interested in destroying them! Without God's protection and restraining power over Satan, which He promises to grant us if we remain close to Him, none could ever make it!

Before Jesus Christ could qualify to restore the government of God and rule all nations, He had to withstand Satan's most severe temptations. That supreme struggle is recorded in the fourth chapter of Matthew. Notice how the devil attempted to deceive and influence Jesus Christ to sin against God.

9. When Jesus was extremely hungry, how did the devil appeal both to human vanity and hunger? Matthew 4:1-4.And to the human desire for prestige, glory, and power? Matthew 4:5-9. What were Jesus' immediate responses? Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7, Matthew 4:10. What was the outcome of this titanic spiritual battle? Matthew 4:11.

COMMENT: Christ overcame the devil. Jesus resisted Satan, conquered him, and showed His MASTERY over him! When He gave the devil an order, he had to obey. He slunk away, knowing he was defeated in this supreme spiritual encounter of all time.

Christ overcame the devil's wiles by the Word of God. He responded to the devil's temptations by citing the appropriate scripture that applied in each situation. He knew the Word of God thoroughly. He KNEW God's will. Therefore, the devil could not deceive Him!

10. Are Christians today also to resist the devil with the truth God has revealed to them? 1 Peter 5:9.What must the devil do if resisted steadfastly? James 4:7.

11. What instructions on fighting against the impulses and attitudes of the devil does God give through Paul? Ephesians 6:10-12.What are Christians to put on in order to fight this spiritual battle? Ephesians 6:11, Ephesians 6:13. Of what does God's spiritual armor consist? Ephesians 6:14-20.

COMMENT: "Truth" refers to the inspired Word of God (John 17:17), the first piece in the Christian's spiritual armor. The "breastplate of righteousness" is obedience to God's

commandments (Psalms 119:172); the "gospel" is the message of the coming Kingdom of God when Christ will rule this earth and bring it peace. The "shield of faith" refers to the faith of Jesus Christ which can be within us (Galatians 2:20;Php 3:9)--not just to our own human, physical faith. This faith is God's gift imparted by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). And it is this faith—Christ's faith put within us—that will enable us to conquer and overcome sin! The "helmet of salvation" is the knowledge of what salvation is, what it involves, what it's all about—the very purpose of life. In other words, it is the knowledge of the TRUE GOAL and potential destiny of mankind—that of becoming divine members of the Family of God! The "sword of the Spirit" refers to the written Word of God—it is the Christian's only offensive weapon in fighting the devil and his wiles (Hebrews 4:12). It cuts the enemy's tactics and strategies to ribbons, and shows us what the enemy is up to. The final thing Paul mentions in fighting Satan and his wiles is "prayer." Christians are to draw close to God in persevering prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), praying for all of God's people, the ministry of God's church, and themselves. This is the way to defeat—to OVERCOME—Satan and to force him to flee! This is the perfect strategy for defeating human nature and the allure of this world, since they are both essentially motivated by the devil. If Christians will diligently follow this formula, their success in overcoming all three deadly foes will be guaranteed.

Why "Overcoming" is so Important The Bible speaks a great deal about "overcoming." Let's understand exactly why it is so important in living the Christian life, and what bearing that overcoming has on the "occupations" of born-again Christians in the Kingdom of God.

1. Did Jesus Christ become perfect? Hebrews 2:9-10.Notice especially the last part of verse 10. What did Christ say He expects of those who would claim to be His followers? Matthew 5:48.Who are they to become like? Ephesians 4:13.

COMMENT: As we learned in the previous lesson, Jesus spoke of becoming perfect. But exactly what kind of "perfection" was He talking about? In the original Greek, the word for "perfect" is teleios, which also means "complete." In other words, Jesus means that His followers are to become fully grown and spiritually mature.

Obviously, we cannot become absolutely perfect until the resurrection when God will complete the process and give us new, perfect spiritual bodies with a perfect—sinless—nature that will be like God's. But in the meantime, God wants us to strive to perfect His spiritual character in us by obeying His commandments, and overcoming and rooting sin out of our lives.

2. Even though Christ was the very Son of God and possessed the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), did He still have to learn obedience? Hebrews 5:8-9.Did Christ "overcome"? John 16:33.Did He resist temptation? Hebrews 4:15.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ became perfect through the trials and tests of human experience. He overcame the temptations of the devil, His flesh, and the world around Him. In spite of opposition and temptation, He kept God's commandments perfectly. Thus He was able to become the Savior of mankind and the supreme example of spiritual maturity Christians are to be striving to emulate. The Bible shows that striving to perfect the spiritual character of Christ is an ongoing process of overcoming throughout the Christian life— of putting sin out of our lives, learning to control and rule over the downward pulls of our nature.

3. Just how important is overcoming to your being in God’s Kingdom and receiving a reward? Revelation 2:7,Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 3:5,Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:21;Revelation 21:7.

COMMENT: Through overcoming the sinful pulls of the flesh, the world and the devil, our spiritual character is being perfected—we are building the very character of God. And the more we overcome, the greater the responsibility we will be capable of exercising in Christ’s government on earth. Thus the greater will be our reward! But no one can overcome for us. It requires putting forth effort on our part, together with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, to become the kind of spiritually minded and motivated person God can use in His Kingdom. And just as with Christ, our overcoming involves "good works."

4. Does the principle of Matthew 24:46-47 illustrate that it is those who OVERCOME to the very end—those who are still growing in character at Christ’s return (or at their death, if that comes first)--who shall inherit God’s Kingdom and receive a reward?

5. Does 2 Peter 1:5-9 also show there is need for continual growth in the virtues of Christian character as long as a person lives? Does 2 Peter 1:10 imply that those who don’t continue to grow and overcome will not make it into God’s Kingdom? To Become Inheritors with Christ

1. Because Jesus Christ overcame during His human life and was "born again" by a resurrection, where is He presently seated? Revelation 3:21.Have all the angels, authorities, and powers been made subject to Him under His Father? 1 Peter 3:22;Ephesians 1:20-22;1 Corinthians 15:27.

2. What will be Christ’s official title when He returns to rule the nations of earth? Revelation 19:16.Will there ever be an end to the increase of His glorious government? Isaiah 9:6-7.

3. Just how great is the authority which Christ has already inherited? Hebrews 1:1-2;Matthew 28:18.

COMMENT: Notice how the Moffatt translation renders the original Greek of Hebrews 1:2:"But in these days at the end he has spoken to us by a Son—a Son whom he has appointed heir of the UNIVERSE...!

4. Will Christ be the only inheritor and ruler of this earth and the vast universe? Or will there be co-rulers, "joint-heirs," with Him to share His great inheritance and responsibility? Romans 8:16-17;Revelation 21:7.

COMMENT: We, if we have become true Christians, are now the Spirit-begotten "children" of God. We are heirs—joint-heirs with Jesus Christ to inherit and rule EVERYTHING God has created!

Notice also the second chapter of Hebrews. Beginning with Hebrews 2:6, the apostle Paul quoted Psalms 8:4-6:"What is man, that thou [God] art mindful of him?" Yes, why should the great God be concerned about us mortals? Why were we born?

Here is the answer: "Thou hast put ALL THINGS in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not [to be] put under him" (Hebrews 2:8). Do you grasp that? Absolutely nothing God has created is excepted. We were BORN TO RULE! The awesome destiny of mankind is co-rulership first of this earth, and then the vast universe with

Jesus Christ! But not until we have qualified and been "born again" as members of God’s Family.

Thus far only Jesus Christ, the "first born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29), has received this power. So "... now [today] we see not yet all things put under him [man]. But we see Jesus...crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:8-9). He alone has received the power and glory we are to receive when we, too, are born of God at the resurrection of the dead. Can you begin to grasp the magnitude of these sure promises of God?

5. In what capacity is Christ now serving true Christians? Hebrews 4:14-16.

COMMENT: As the High Priest of all Spirit-begotten children of God, Christ is always available to help them in times of need. He takes special interest in their spiritual development, helping to prepare them so they can eventually inherit "all things" with Him!

Why YOU Should Want to Rule

Many are surprised to learn that the Bible says so much about ruling in the Kingdom of God. Some doubt that they could ever qualify to rule over others. Perhaps even you have thought, "But I don’t want to rule. I just want to serve God and live my life as a Christian."

History right down to the present is replete with accounts of rulers, politicians and bureaucrats who have abused their power and served their own interests, while calling themselves "benefactors" or servants of the people (Luke 22:25-26). Small wonder that many people have little desire to emulate such authority.

Jesus Christ, who has qualified for the greatest position of rulership under the Father in the coming Kingdom of God, said He came to be a servant (Luke 22:27). What an apparent paradox! Let’s see how and why service to God actually entails rulership.

1. How does a truly converted Christian express service to God? Matthew 25:24-36.

COMMENT: We serve God when we help and serve our fellowman. Christ said "... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me" (Matthew 25:40). This troubled world is filled with needy, sick, and lonely people. Hundreds of millions in this world would benefit from even basic instruction in how to improve the quality of their physical lives, including their everyday cleanliness and hygiene! Above all, they need to know the very truth of God—His purpose and plan for mankind, and how to assure their entry into God’s Family. This whole world has a crying need to understand the Word of God!

Christ came to serve, not to be served (Matthew 20:28). The foot-washing ceremony which He established shortly before His crucifixion symbolized this attitude of service. We should want to imitate Christ’s example (1 Peter 2:21;John 13:17). A deeply converted Christian will want to help change this world and help others to share in the blessings of God’s way of life. That is, in fact, what the return of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom [government] is all about! All Spirit-begotten Christians are, in reality, now training for a vital role in that government of the wonderful World Tomorrow under Christ’s leadership and rule. The Christian life, then, is one of overcoming, growing, preparing, and developing for service through rulership in the Millennium, as well as serving others here and now!

2. What will the saints be doing in the Kingdom of God during the Millennium? Read Revelation 3:21,Revelation 2:26,Revelation 20:4-6 once again.

COMMENT: We read of "thrones," "judgment" and "reigning." These scriptures indicate that Christians will receive positions of rulership in God's Kingdom. All who are converted and learning to overcome now will eventually be "kings and priests," or rulers of various kinds in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 5:10). That is the very purpose for which we were created. Our ultimate destiny, if we accept God's calling, is rulership of the world—and eventually the entire universe—under Christ. Yes, we were BORN TO rule.

3. By what principle can a person of ordinary ability and humble opportunity in this life ever qualify to take on far greater responsibility in the Kingdom of God? Luke 16:10.

COMMENT: We learn to rule by being faithful—conscientious—in whatever we do. We must put into practice in our daily lives the principles and laws we learn from God's Word. Even the person who considers himself or herself as having only a little ability and natural talent, can qualify to rule in God's Kingdom. We learn to rule tomorrow by learning to manage our own affairs and responsibilities today, no matter how small they may be.

God is no respecter of persons or sexes (Romans 2:11;Galatians 3:28). What sex we were born has no bearing on our reward in God's Kingdom. Our future reward will be determined solely by the degree of our "works" in this life. Note: It is by God's "grace" that we will attain His Kingdom—attain immortality as God's gift. But it is by our works that we will attain an office of responsibility—an opportunity for greater service, for doing more good—once we are born into God's ruling Family. As our Savior and elder brother—"the firstborn among many brethren"- Jesus Christ has already qualified for the highest office under God the Father in the coming World Tomorrow. No one else can ever receive the position of rulership the Father has promised Him. Notice a few other positions which are mentioned specifically in scripture.

4. To whom has God promised rulership over the united nation of Israel?

Ezekiel 37:21-22,Ezekiel 37:24. What positions of rulership did Jesus promise to give each of His twelve apostles under David? Matthew 19:27-28.Has God alluded to others who will be in His Kingdom? Hebrews 11:4-40.

COMMENT: Other overcomers have gone before us and are to be in God's Kingdom. They have already qualified for responsibilities in God's ruling Family, though God has not specifically revealed their positions to us in the Bible. But every individual will have a tremendous job to do, for an entirely new civilization must be built on earth during the Millennium (to say nothing of the universe beyond)--built this time to God's specifications. It will take many different, vital jobs to recreate world society as God would have it.

5. Will there really be enough opportunities to serve for all who have overcome down through the ages? John 14:1-3.

COMMENT: By speaking of the temple ("my Father's house") having many "mansions" ("rooms" in the Revised Standard Version and other translations), Jesus illustrated the concept that there would be places for many assistants in the government of the Kingdom of God on earth, when Jerusalem will be the millennial world capital. "I will come [back to earth] again, and receive you

unto myself; that where I am [headquartered in the temple of God on earth], there ye may be also" (John 14:3). Christ assures us that He and the Father will have ample opportunities and challenging, interesting positions of responsibility for everyone who is born into God's ruling Family!

You CAN Overcome! The newly Spirit-begotten Christian has embarked on an exciting new way of life. But as with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Paul, God knows that Christians will occasionally stumble spiritually—they still can and will sin (1 John 1:8-9). But our merciful God promises to forgive us if we repent, and will strengthen us so we can continue to overcome and be granted eternal life in His glorious Kingdom.

God does not call people to the true Christian way of life to be losers. He does not want any to miss out on the rewards and joys of eternal life in His Family (2 Peter 3:9;1 Timothy 2:4). But God will not do it all for us. We have our part to do!

How is it possible to continue to overcome, to press on toward the eternal goal, to strive toward the perfection of the character of Jesus Christ and be born into God's Family? Through the FAITH OF CHRIST—Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Paul said: "I CAN do all things [overcome any trials, test, trouble, or sin] THROUGH CHRIST which strengtheneth me." (Php 4:13.) SO CAN WE!

Yes, through Christ we can please God, fulfill His law, and overcome! Let's understand. 1. Did Paul, an apostle of God who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, actually say that Christians must "work out" their own salvation? Php 2:12.Also notice 2 Peter 1:10.

COMMENT: SO Christians, immediately upon initial conversion, have something they must begin to do, not only then, but for the rest of their natural lives. The Christian life involves "works"—it involves doing something! The Christian life presupposes putting forth the effort to "overcome." Christ said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God's way of life is one of productivity, growth and exciting challenge.

2. Then can we earn our salvation by our own works after all? Romans 6:23;Php 2:13.

COMMENT: As mentioned earlier, eternal life is a gift of God. You cannot earn your salvation by your works. However, the Christian still has his part to do. The Bible tells us that we must disencumber ourselves of habits and sins that enslave us. We must thwart ungodly, unchristian patterns that would ultimately destroy us (Romans 6:23). But how? Through our own human power and our own willpower alone? No, not a single one will ever conquer the influences of the world, the flesh and the devil through human strength alone.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the five principal founding fathers of the United States, once set himself to attain the goal of moral perfection.

Here is an excerpt from the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin:

"It was about this time that I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other." But before long

Dr. Franklin found the task no easy one. Continuing with his autobiographical testimony: "But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention: inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was [in] our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and the good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of content" (emphasis ours).

3. What similar frustrations did Paul experience over the expressions of his carnal nature? Romans 7:7-25.Notice especially Romans 7:15, Romans 7:19 and Romans 7:23.

COMMENT: Paul found that when he tried to resist his human nature, bad habits and sins would not easily be dismissed. In fact, when his attention was drawn to eradicating his personal sins they seemed to become more pronounced. Paul, the apostle that God inspired and used to write at least thirteen books of the New Testament, cried out "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Of course, Paul did overcome. He wrote the following words to His young protege shortly before his death: "...the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8,RSV).

Notice how Paul succeeded in overcoming.

4. What, or who, is the KEY to Christian overcoming? Php 4:13;John 15:5;1 John 4:4;Romans 8:37.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, who once defeated Satan (Matthew 4:1-25) and qualified to become "King of kings and Lord of lords," will again defeat Satan and this world’s influences through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! He told His disciples to be of good cheer because He had overcome the world (John 16:33). John further testified that the One who dwells in every true Christian through the Spirit of God is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4).

5. But didn’t Jesus say He could, of Himself, do absolutely nothing? John 5:30.

COMMENT: Think of it. Even the very Son of God said He could do nothing (no spiritual works) by His own human power. If Christ, when in the flesh, had no faith in Himself, how much less, then, can you and I accomplish by trusting in ourselves?

Few realize that Christ’s obedience and even the miracles He performed were not done by any supernatural power of His own. ALL His spiritual works were done literally through faith in God’s power, setting a marvelous example for us.

6. What was the source of Christ’s dynamic faith? John 14:10-11.

COMMENT: The Father who lived in Jesus through His Holy Spirit made His obedience to God’s law possible! Christ had the very faith of God.

7. Are Christians to live by faith? Hebrews 10:38;Romans 1:17.But is having faith in God’s power all that is required of us today? Romans 3:31.Is faith without obedience a dead faith? James 2:20-22.

COMMENT: The Bible very plainly testifies that each individual Christian has a part in the salvation process. Nevertheless, some professing Christians have been taught that Jesus lived a good life for us--obeyed God’s law in our stead. But we have seen that a Christian is not excused from overcoming, growing in spiritual character, and enduring in spite of all opposition or temptation to quit. These scriptures make it crystal clear that having faith does not excuse us from accomplishing these spiritual works. This is a great mystery to those who don’t understand. Since we must do these things to be saved, yet are utterly unable to do them of ourselves, it is natural to conclude that either God sent Jesus to do it for us and thereby excuse us from accomplishing it, or else to become discouraged and be tempted to quit trying! The true answer is the key to salvation. It is FAITH. Faith in God’s POWER—the same kind of living faith Jesus had!

8. By whose faith is a Christian’s "righteousness"—his obedience to God’s spiritual law—made possible? Php 3:9;Romans 3:22;Revelation 14:12.

COMMENT: Spirit-begotten Christians have the very "faith of Jesus." It’s not just our faith in Him, but His FAITH—the very spiritual faith through which He obeyed God’s laws—placed in us and ACTING in us!

9. Does the Bible call Jesus the author and finisher of our faith? Hebrews 12:2-4.

COMMENT: A more accurate translation of the phrase "author and finisher" is "pioneer and perfecter." Jesus led the way, as our pioneer, setting us the supreme example of living faith. But Jesus also perfects His faith IN us! Here’s how:

10. Did the apostle Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Galatians 2:20.

How did Christ live in him? Php 2:5;Romans 8:9-10.Then did Paul live his life by Christ’s faith dwelling in him? Galatians 2:20 once again.

COMMENT: Paul didn’t live by his own faith. The mind of Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God implanted in Paul’s mind the same faith that can be in your mind! This faith—the very faith of Jesus Christ—will enable you to live an overcoming life as did the apostle Paul!

11. Is the very faith of Jesus Christ, by which we receive eternal salvation, a gift of God? Ephesians 2:8-9.Is this faith one of the results of having the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22.Does it enable you to do "good works"? Ephesians 2:10.

COMMENT: The faith that saves is the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ’s faith—not your faith. And the Christ who can live in us by God’s Spirit will impart His strong faith to you and me, which makes our spiritual obedience and overcoming possible!

12. What must you do to receive the very faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 2:38.Must you be willing to obey God? Acts 5:32.And must you first show faith toward Christ before He will give you His faith? Acts 20:21;Romans 1:17.

COMMENT: God will give His Holy Spirit and the resulting faith of Christ only to those who meet these prior conditions.

Repentance is toward God and means that we have decided to change the entire course of our life—to quit sinning against God and sincerely desire to begin living by all His commandments. We utterly abhor not only our old sinful way of life, but also the natural inclinations of our carnal mind which has been swayed by the devil (Romans 8:7;Ephesians 2:2).

Then we must show our own faith, or belief, in the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus Christ, shed in order to pay the death penalty which our past sins have incurred. Upon our faith in the reason for His ID death—our acceptance of him as personal Savior from our sins—and then our baptism in water, God is bound by His Word to give us His Holy Spirit.

Yes, it does take our own faith to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. But that faith doesn't save us! Only when the Holy Spirit comes into us to beget us spiritually, and we receive the faith of Christ implanted within us, do we obtain saving faith! And it all comes as a free gift from God. We could never "earn" it.

13. Once we receive God's Holy Spirit, must the faith that it imparts grow? 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

COMMENT: Faith is not implanted in our mind whole and complete when we receive the Spirit of God. Faith must grow. It must be nourished in order to develop. It needs exercise and practice. That faith must grow by testing and by our works. It must be living faith.

14. Let's reexamine the example of Abraham—the "father" of the faithful (Romans 4:16)and the one God called His friend. How did God perfect faith in Abraham? James 2:21-24.Especially notice James 2:22.

COMMENT: Abraham was a close friend of God. And, as a result, he received the help to set an outstanding record of faith. If we will let the Holy Spirit flow through us, then we, too, can be close friends of God as Abraham was, and be perfecting faith as he did.

Good friends spend a lot of time together in conversation. They discuss life, their goals, problems, and listen willingly to each other. If you are a close friend of God, then you will want to talk to Him. You will also be listening to Him talk to you. Often! And you will often think about and ponder His words. Notice what Christ has to say about this two-way conversation.

15. How did Jesus teach His followers to converse with the Father? Luke 11:1.What is the general format we should follow when we pray? Luke 11:2-4; Matthew 6:9-15.Should we repeat words aimlessly, or by memory? Matthew 6:7-8.Should we pray in a private place, where we can be alone with God? Matthew 6:5-6.

16. Should we not only pray for our own needs, but also for God's Work, His ministers, and the Spirit-begotten children of God's Church (the "saints")? Ephesians 6:18-19.Who was an outstanding example of this kind of praying? Colossians 4:12-13.

COMMENT: When you pray to God, you are actually talking to Him. You are coming into His presence, taking His time, and letting Him know how you feel about certain things, how you think about certain problems which arise, and asking Him for His guidance, counsel, advice, and help in

solving the problems before you. When you pray for the needs of others and the needs of God’s Work, God listens! He is very much concerned about the welfare of all His people, and the crises and trials His Work experiences, as well as your own personal welfare.

God is not far off or aloof to His spiritual children. He wants us to come to Him often, to talk to Him in prayer, to commune with Him to receive the help we need to live the Christian way of life.

He also wants us to listen to Him when He speaks to us. How does He do this? Through His inspired Word. When you read and study the scriptures, God is actually talking to you through them. They are His words to you. Notice the enigmatic analogy Jesus used to illustrate this point.

17. Is Jesus Christ the personification of the Word of God? John 1:1,John 1:14. Does He therefore tell us to "eat His flesh"?! John 6:50,John 6:53, John 6:57. What was He talking about? John 6:63.

COMMENT: How can one "eat" the flesh of Christ? He certainly did not mean that His disciples were to become cannibals! He was talking figuratively. He was actually referring to His words. As He said in John 6:63,"...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." When you study your Bible, you are "eating" the flesh of Christ. That is, you are "devouring" His words, which are life-giving. They are spiritual. They impart life. They show you the way into God’s Family.

Learn to let Christ, and the Father, speak to you from the Bible. Absorb the mind of Christ (Php 2:5)and allow the Word of God to guide and direct you.

God’s way is so plain and simple when we understand it. We are able, after all, to press toward the goal of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ, to strive toward the perfection of the character of God through the FAITH OF CHRIST—"Christ in us, the hope of glory." And it is all accomplished as a result of having the Holy Spirit in us, and as we exercise it.

We are to obey God’s laws and live the Christian life as if we were doing it all through our own effort, but because "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," God makes up the necessary difference. Like Paul who was mindful of his own human limitations, we look to God for the help to accomplish His purpose in us—"for my weakness makes me strong in him" (2 Corinthians 12:10,Phillips New Testament in Modern English).

Through Christ YOU, TOO, can conquer every sin, surmount every obstacle, defeat every foe, and overcome every hindrance which stands to thwart your way into God’s Family!

Remember the apostle Paul exuded Christ’s confidence. He was SURE! He was CERTAIN! Paul walked, talked, and lived with Christ and the Father through the Holy Spirit within him. He had the very faith and assurance of Jesus Christ. So can you! It’s Up to You

You were born with the potential to become a member of the universe-ruling Family of God—to have a part in governing, teaching, and guiding the world in the Millennium and in the Last Judgment period—and after that, to help rule the entire creation of God for eternity! This is the awesome destiny God offers to mankind! Have you begun the salvation process toward this marvelous goal? Analyze your own life and character. Have you begun obeying God? Are you growing spiritually? Are you developing—growing—in self-control? In the ability to restrain wrong desires, selfish motives or vanity? Are you replacing bad habits and attitudes with right thoughts

and deeds?

If you suddenly had some really great responsibility thrust into your hands to direct—perhaps a major department of a city—perhaps a vast manufacturing concern with many subsidiaries—would you be able to direct and carry out that responsibility as God would have it done?

Well, the test is this: If you are now rightly directing the little powers in your control, such as your temper, your voice, your passions and emotions, or your present perhaps small income, then you probably could be entrusted to properly carry out at least a somewhat larger responsibility. But if you have not yet begun to learn to control and constructively guide even these little powers in your care, then how could God entrust you to handle far greater responsibilities in the Kingdom of God? If you don’t learn to be faithful even in the use of your present income, who will entrust to your care the true riches, and the great powers of God?

Ask God for the understanding and wisdom to rightly use and direct the comparatively little powers, abilities and responsibilities that are now yours so you can be a faithful and productive servant of God.

Strive to be faithful over what God has already given you, so that one day Christ can say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over MUCH..." (Matthew 25:21,RSV). This life is the training ground. We learn to rule by performing our responsibilities faithfully and by learning to rule over ourselves as we live the Christian way of life.

Preparing to rule in God’s Kingdom begins with submission to His rule now. God will not save any person He does not govern. So learn God’s laws. Study them. Think about them. Live by them. And with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, overcome your human nature, the pulls of the world, and the wiles of Satan the devil.

Seek God by drawing closer to Him in prayer and study. Change! Grow spiritually. Continually build the character of God until death, or until the moment Jesus Christ returns when God will instantly change our weak, inadequate bodies into powerful, sinless, glorified spirit bodies! (Php 3:20-21.) Then you will be ready to rule with Christ. Our awesome destiny is that of helping to rule the earth and the universe beyond as a member of the God Family!

It’s a breathtaking, exciting, incredible calling! A glorious, wonderful future! Have you begun to qualify for it? It’s up to you.

TEST YOUR MEMORY This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you’ve finished the test, check your choices with the correct answers at the end of this lesson, and then rate yourself.

1. To "walk" with God means A. to obey God’s commandments and laws as revealed in the Bible. B. to be a close friend of Jesus Christ and His Father. C. to follow in Christ’s steps, striving to emulate His example. D. all of the above.

2. The Ten Commandments A. were for the physical nation of Israel until Christ came. B. are expressions of God’s love and character. C. can be kept by a person merely exercising His own willpower and self-determination. D. were a necessary evil before Christ, and have since been nullified by God’s grace.

3. Obedience to God’s law A. can "earn" your salvation. B. is no longer necessary since Christ kept the law for us. C. removes the need for God’s grace. D. should be the earnest desire of every Christian.

4. The seventh-day Sabbath A. was "made" by Christ by His resting on the last day of Creation week. B. was devised by men for worship purposes. C. was never set apart by God as holy time for holy use. D. is Sunday, the first day of the week.

5. Which one of the following annual Sabbaths or festivals pictures the dramatic return of Jesus Christ? A. The Passover. B. The Feast of Trumpets. C. The Day of Atonement. D. The Last Great Day.

6. Tithing A. is not a God-ordained obligation upon Christians today. B. is God’s system for financing His ministry which is proclaiming Christ’s Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. C. was an idea of Moses which he imposed on ancient Israel. D. epitomizes the "get" way of life.

7. Which one of the following is not a mortal enemy of all Christians? A. Satan the devil. B. The distractions in society which lead us away from God. C. The Spirit which begets us. D. Our own, oftentimes deceitful, rationalizing natures.

8. A Christian’s reward A. will be awarded as a result of God’s "grace." B. will be determined by his own effort and individual works after he becomes a Christian. C. cannot be earned. D. is the same as God’s "gift" of eternal life.

9. The faith that enables one to live the Christian way of life A. is supplied by each Christian. B. can be "worked up" if one is a true believer. C. is the very faith of Jesus Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit. D. is not a "fruit" of the Holy Spirit.

10. Christians derive spiritual help and encouragement from A. God’s Word, the Bible. B. the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit. C. Christ who is their "High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14-16). D. all of the above.

TRUE OR FALSE 11. A Christian, by biblical definition, is one who simply professes to be one. T F 12. To "become perfect" (Matthew 5:48)means to gradually mature spiritually. T F 13. The foot-washing ceremony depicts an attitude of superiority and lordship over others. T F 14. Christians learn to rule themselves in this life to qualify for service in the Millennium. T F 15. Only the "overcomers" will become co-inheritors of God’s creation with Christ. T F

Draw a line from each phrase column to the correctly related right-hand column. in the left-hand . phrase in the right-hand column.

16. Obedience to God

A. Responsibilities

B. Curses

17. God’s tithe

C. Jesus Christ

D. Houses

18. "Mansions"

E. A tenth

F. Passover lamb

19. Our Passover

G. An offering

H. Blessings

20. Christians

I. Spirit-begotten

J. Devout

ANSWERS TO QUIZ Rate Yourself 1-D 5-B 9-C 13-F 17-E 19-20 correct excellent 2-B 6-B 10-D 14-T 18-A 16-18 correct good 3-D 7-C 11-F 15-T 19-C 13-15 correct fair 4-A 8-B 12-T 16-H 20-I

Lesson 13

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 13 Who And What Is God?

There is much confusion about the IDENTITY, the NATURE and PURPOSE of God. Even traditional Christianity does not really understand. The astonishing truth about God is found in the Bible, as this lesson reveals! WHEN the Editor was in India years ago, he noticed cows and oxen wandering through the streets the Editor asked his driver, "Don't these cattle stray quite a distance from home?"

"Oh yes," was the answer. "But," The Editor asked, "when they wander all over the streets so far away, how do their owners know where to find them, to drive them back home for the night?" The driver smiled. "The owners don't. The cattle and the oxen know their owners and where they live. They find their own way home in the evening."

God Not Known Today The preceding incident illustrates the scripture found in Isaiah 1:2-4:"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

These words were directed to ancient Israel, a nation to which God had revealed Himself by many infallible proofs and miracles. But the Israelites rebelled against Him and forgot who and what He is. How much less do the nations today know about who and what God is!

Today, modern science does not know whether God even exists—much less who and what He is. Neither does higher education know or teach the amazing truth about God's identity, Rather, modern education has universally accepted the fable of evolution. Evolution is the atheist's attempt to explain the existence of a creation without the preexistence of a Creator. It totally excludes God from the picture. A World in Religious Confusion!

It seems utterly unbelievable, but the religions of this world do not know who or what God is! Yet, religion is the worship of God. But how can one worship what is unknown?

You live in a world of religious confusion! Among the largest of the world's religions are Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The Christian religion, with its hundreds of denominations and sects, is the largest in number of adherents. Yet not even traditional Christianity really knows who and what God is!

One billion people—nearly a fourth of the world's population—live in China. In ancient times the religion in China was ancestor worship. Then came Confucianism, Taoism, and later, Buddhism. Today, communism prevails and therefore the nation is atheistic. In India, the second largest nation in population, Hinduism is the chief religion. Do the multiple millions of Hindus know who and what the true God is? The answer is an astounding no!

Russian Orthodox Christianity was once the predominant religion of Russia, the third most populous nation. But now it, like China, is atheistic. In ancient Egypt, the people worshipped Isis and Osiris—Egyptian gods corresponding to Nimrod and his mother-wife, Semiramis. The ancient Greeks and Romans had mythological gods such as Jupiter, Hermes, Dionysus, Zeus, Apollo, Diana and many others. But they did not know who and what God is, and neither do their modern-day descendants!

There is only one church on earth today that knows who and WHAT God is! That one true Church was founded in A.D. 31 by Jesus Christ, and that "little flock" is still in existence today! The "Unknown God" Revealed In Acts 17:15-34,we are told of the Apostle Paul's stay in the Greek city of Athens, where he preached God's truth. In the first century world, the Athenians were considered to be the intellectuals. One day, some of the Epicurian and Stoic philosophers encountered the Apostle Paul.

"What will this babbler say?" queried some in ridicule (Acts 17:18). Others said sarcastically, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods."

These intellectuals then brought Paul to Areopagus, the supreme educational and religious court of Athens, located on Mars' hill.

"May we know," they asked, "what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears" (Acts 17:19-20).

Here were the world's most scholarly men. And Paul began preaching the truth of God to them.

"Ye men of Athens," said the apostle forthrightly and boldly, "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your [idolatrous] devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you, God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:22-26). Who is God", He is the Creator, the One who "made the world and all things therein." Creation is the basic proof of God's existence. These Athenian Epicureans and Stoics, like the adherents of many religions today, did not even know that. But what is the real NATURE of the Creator God". Just who and WHAT is God? We need a more concrete understanding than to merely say: "the Being who created everything." Certainly that is the starting point, but there is much more.

Before beginning your study of this all-important subject, be sure to get your Bible so you can look up every verse given in answer to the questions asked in this lesson. This procedure is absolutely essential in your study of the Bible with this course. "Study," said the Apostle Paul, "to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15). Be sure to "prove all things," as Paul exhorted the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Now let's begin this fascinating and revealing study of God's Word.

LESSON 13 God in Prehistory

If you were asked where in the Bible can one find the earliest account of the existence of God, you would probably say, Why, in the very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1,of course. Wouldn't that

be right?

Wrong!

Let’s begin this study by going back in time into prehistory, before the existence of the material universe.

1. Where, in the time order of God’s existence, is the earliest revelation of who and WHAT God is? John 1:1-3.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John 1:1 is Logos. It means spokesman, or one who speaks, and is the name of a divine Being.

2. Was the Word made flesh? Verse 14. Did He live on earth as a human being? Same verse and Matthew 1:23.Is He the only begotten Son of God the Father? John 1:14 once again.

COMMENT: The Word is a divine Being who was made flesh and blood nearly 2,000 years ago, He became the human Jesus Christ! He was begotten by God who, through this very begettal, became His Father. But at the prehistoric time described in John 1:1, the Word was not yet the Son of God and God was not yet His Father, He was made God’s Son later, through being miraculously begotten by God and born of the virgin Mary as a human being.

Jesus’ begettal by God the Father was unique in the history of the world. Mary, His mother, was the only virgin who has ever conceived a child whose father was God! In this sense, Jesus is the "only begotten" Son of the Father. So at the prehistoric time described in John 1:1-3,we find revealed the existence of only two divine Beings. One is God. And with God is another Being who also is God—one who was later begotten and born as Jesus Christ.

3. Hebrews 7:1-28 sheds more light on the preexistence of Jesus Christ. Speaking of Melchizedek, who was "king of righteousness" and "king of Salem" (which later became known as Jerusalem) in the days of Abraham, we are told that He had been the High Priest of God. Had Melchizedek also existed from eternity? Hebrews 7:3.Is the risen Jesus Christ our eternal High Priest today? Hebrews 6:20;Hebrews 7:25-27,

COMMENT: Since Melchizedek was without descent, was "like unto the Son of God," and abides as High Priest forever, and since Jesus Christ is now our eternal High Priest, Melchizedek and Christ (the Word) are one and the same divine Being!

Christ, when He was the Word, was an immortal Being who had always existed. There had never been a time when He did not exist—He was literally without "beginning of days." He was then "like" the Son of God, but He was not yet the Son of God. He also was God, along with God who became the Father. (Students who wish to study the subject of Melchizedek further may request the free reprint article entitled "The Mystery of Melchizedek Solved!")

Both members of the God Family have existed eternally (Psalms 90:2;Hebrews 1:8,Hebrews 1:10-12; 1 Timothy 1:17), It is impossible for our finite human minds to understand how these two Beings could have always existed, but neither can we really understand what electricity is. Yet we know electricity exists and is very real!

4. Exactly why did the Word—the second member of the God Family— become a flesh-and-blood human being? John 3:16;Romans 5:6-10;Hebrews 2:9-10.

COMMENT: Jesus was both human and divine. God was His Father and Mary was His mother. He was both the "Son of God" and the "Son of man." He was born of the virgin Mary so that, as a human, he could die for the sins of all mankind. As the Son of God and as the Creator of the entire universe and of all mankind (John 1:3;Ephesians 3:9), Christ's life was worth more than all other human lives combined! Therefore, He could pay the death penalty of sin for the entire human race, so that others could receive God's Spirit and ultimately be born into the Family of God and become Christ's younger brothers (Romans 8:29;Hebrews 2:11).

What Does God Look Like?

1. In whose image and likeness did God make man? Genesis 1:26.Can we therefore conclude that both members of the God Family look like a man? Same verse.

COMMENT: We know what form and shape a man has. Since Adam was created in the "image" of God, after His "likeness," God therefore has the form and shape of a man. The Bible reveals that God has a face, torso, arms, legs, hands, fingers, feet and toes.

2. Recall that the Word of the God Family became flesh and blood and lived on the earth. Did Jesus look so much like any other average man in His community that He had to be specially pointed out to be identified? Matthew 26:47-49.

3. Whom did Jesus tell Philip that the Father in heaven looked like? John 14:9.

4. Even though God the Father looks like a man, what is He composed of? John 4:24.Is He therefore invisible to human eyes? 1 Timothy 1:17.

5. Are the Father's and Christ's appearances described as glorious? John 17:5,What does Jesus, after His resurrection and restoration to former glory, look like? Revelation 1:13-18.

COMMENT: If we could see both God the Father and Christ the Son as they appear today in their glorified state in heaven, their faces would be as bright as the SUN in full strength! Their eyes would be like flames of fire, their feet like burnished brass and their hair as white as snow!

God Is a Family, Not a Limited "Trinity"

We have learned that two Supreme Beings—God and the Word—have always existed. But what about the generally accepted Trinity doctrine of traditional Christianity? According to this teaching, God is composed of three divine Beings: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Do you know how the Trinity concept entered the Christian-professing world? It most emphatically did not come from the Bible!

We read in Revelation 12:9 that all nations have been deceived by Satan the devil. It seems incredible that Satan not only could have deceived the whole world, but also "Christianity"—the very religion bearing Christ's name and claiming to be His religion, Yet, paradoxically, Satan did! How did he introduce the false doctrine of the Trinity?

Satan’s deception was accomplished through a great false church, which was started in A.D. 33 by a man named Simon, who is mentioned in the eighth chapter of Acts. Simon was the leader of the pagan Babylonian mystery religion.

Two years after Jesus Christ founded the Church of God, the deacon Philip, who later became an evangelist, went to Samaria and preached Christ’s Gospel there. Simon, a sorcerer who had bewitched the people of that region, came with the crowd to hear what Philip had to say.

1. Did all the people of Samaria follow Simon? Acts 8:9-11.Had he deceived them into believing he was a man of God? Acts 8:10.

2. But when these same people believed Philip, who was preaching Christ and the Kingdom of God, were they baptized? Acts 8:12.Was Simon also baptized? Acts 8:13.

3. When the Apostles Peter and John came to Samaria to lay hands on the newly baptized for the receipt of the Holy Spirit, did Simon try to buy from them what he thought was the power to impart the Spirit of God? Acts 8:18-19,Did Peter recognize that although Simon had been baptized along with a number of others, his attitude was totally wrong, and that he only desired to gain more power and further exalt himself in the eyes of the people? Acts 8:20-23.

COMMENT: Peter strongly rebuked Simon for his evil intentions. But Simon refused to repent, as indicated by his merely asking Peter to pray for him (Acts 8:24).

Desiring to exalt himself among the people, Simon proclaimed himself an apostle. He appropriated the name of Christ and began calling his pagan Babylonian mystery religion "Christianity." He accepted the doctrine of "grace" for the forgiveness of sin (which the pagan religions had never taught), but then turned grace into license to disobey God (Jude 1:4). He planned to turn his pagan religion, now under the name "Christianity," into a universal religion, and to use this as a means of eventually gaining political rule of the world!

Simon’s religion grew rapidly. About 20 years later, the Apostle Paul indicates that much of the Middle East had turned from the true Gospel to a clever counterfeit! (Galatians 1:6-7.) But how did the Trinity doctrine become stamped upon the counterfeit Christianity started by Simon? In A.D. 325, the Roman emperor Constantine called the Nicene Council to settle several religious controversies, which included arguments about belief in a Trinity. Constantine was not a "Christian" then, but as political ruler, he assumed control of the church. The religious council approved the Trinity doctrine. Constantine then made this teaching law throughout the empire. But he was not able to make it the TRUTH! The word "trinity" is not found anywhere in the Bible. That is because God is not a Trinity!

Recall from our studies with Lesson 8 that the false doctrine of the Trinity was further promoted by the addition of uninspired wording to 1 John 5:7-8.Those words were added by editors of the Latin Vulgate translation probably in the early fourth century.

There is a definite reason why Satan, the arch-deceiver, wanted this false doctrine introduced into this world’s Christianity. The Trinity doctrine is his clever attempt to completely do away with the heart and core of the Gospel Jesus Christ preached—the "Gospel of the Kingdom of God." It limits the number of members of the God Kingdom or Family to only three—with no possibility of expansion!

Jesus' Gospel is the message He brought to mankind from God the Father—the good news of the Kingdom or Family of God coming to rule the earth. That is the one truth above all else Satan wants to hide from the eyes of man!

Through the Trinity doctrine, as well as other false doctrines, Satan has thoroughly deceived traditional Christianity, believe it or not! Notice the candid admission of one world-famous evangelist who teaches the doctrine: "When I first began to study the Bible years ago, the doctrine of the Trinity was one of the most complex problems I had to encounter. I have never fully resolved it, for it contains an aspect of mystery... To explain and illustrate the Trinity is one of the most difficult assignments." The reason it is so difficult is because it simply is not true!

4. Does Genesis 1:1 speak of one God? COMMENT: "In the beginning God..." was written by Moses in the Hebrew language. The English word "God" is translated from the Hebrew word Elohim—a plural noun. It, like the words "family," "team" and "church," denotes more than one component forming a whole.

God is NOT a Trinity. God is a Family composed of the two Personages mentioned in John 1:1.However, the God Family will not always be composed of only two divine beings.

God is in the process of expanding His divine Family! Many thousands have already been begotten by God's Spirit, and will soon be born into His Family (either by a resurrection from the dead or an instantaneous change to immortality) at the return of Jesus Christ. Still later, thousands of millions will eventually be born into the Family of God!

Jesus Christ, by His resurrection, was born a divine Son of God (Romans 1:4). But He is only the firstborn of MANY BRETHREN who will also be born into the God Family (Romans 8:29).

God the Father is the divine Father of the GOD Family, and when we who are now the Spirit-begotten sons of God are BORN into His divine Family at Christ's return, we shall be like God (1 John 3:2), for we shall then be the Spirit-born Sons of God!

God Is Creator

1. Did God create all things by Jesus Christ (the Word)? John 1:3;Ephesians 3:9;Colossians 1:15-17;Hebrews 1:2,Hebrews 1:10.

2. How did the Word create the universe and everything that exists? Psalms 33:6-9;Psalms 148:1-5;Psalms 104:30;Genesis 1:1-3.Does God the Father, as the Supreme Creator, tell Christ what to do? John 8:28-29.And does Christ always obey? Same verses.

COMMENT: Christ at all times does what His Father tells Him to do. When creating all things, He spoke, as the workman, and the Holy Spirit was the power through which all that Jesus commanded was accomplished.

Editor-in-Chief Herbert W. Armstrong gave a human analogy of this creative process:

"In the first week in January, 1914, I was sent by a national magazine to Detroit, Michigan, to interview Henry Ford to obtain material for an article on his sensational new $5-a-day wage policy, I saw Henry Ford in the administration building, wearing a business suit with white collar and necktie. Then I looked across the breezeway into the giant factory (then the Highland Park factory)

and I saw perhaps thousands of men in overalls, working at machines powered with electrical energy. Mr. Ford was called the maker of the Ford car. But he made the cars by these workmen, who used the power of electricity and machines."

Similarly, God the Father is Creator. He "created all things by Jesus Christ," who utilized the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task!

3. But matter—the earth, stars and galaxies—was not the first thing

God created. What does the Bible reveal was created before the material universe? Job 38:4-7.COMMENT: In verse 7 the biblical terms "morning stars" and "sons of God" refer to angels. Notice that Revelation 12:4-9 speaks figuratively of the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion as the "stars of heaven." In Isaiah 14:12,we learn that Satan, before he sinned, is referred to as "Lucifer, son of the morning" or "Day Star" (see margin of most Bibles). In Job 1:6 we read that when the "sons of God" (angels) presented themselves to God, Satan came among them, Angels here are referred to as "sons of God" only in the sense that God is their Creator. There is no father-son relationship as Jesus has with God the Father. Angels were not begotten and born of God, as was Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:5)--they were created.

Angels are individually created beings, They can never be begotten by God the Father through His Holy Spirit or be born into His Family as humans can. (Recall that the subjects of spiritual begettal and birth have been thoroughly explained in previous lessons.) But angels shall forever remain the "sons of God" in the sense that God created each angel a separate, immortal spirit being. And so we find that the angels, who had been created previously, were shouting for joy at the creation of the earth, perhaps millions or billions of years before the creation of man, How many angels God created and how long ago, He does not reveal. However, the earth, at first, was the abode or home of angels. The next lesson will reveal much more about the creation, purpose and activities of the angels.

4. Was the entire material universe created at the same time as the earth? Genesis 1:1.

COMMENT: Genesis 1:1 speaks of God creating the heavens and the earth. In the Authorized (King James) Version, the singular form of the word "heaven" is used. But other translations render the original Hebrew in the plural form—"heavens"—implying that the entire material universe was created simultaneously with the earth. A Perfect Creation Becomes Ruined!

We have learned that two all-knowing, all-powerful, all-perfect Superbeings have existed from eternity—possessing supreme mind and creative power. These two divine Beings, composing the nucleus of the God Family, created the entire universe, including man.

Just as human beings think, plan and design before starting to build or construct, so these two Superbeings thought, planned and designed the entire creation. There was no hurry. They may have thought and planned for many millions (or even billions) of years, as we count time, before the actual creation. But these two Supreme Beings first designed and created the angels, which are invisible to human eyes. God created these spirit beings before creating planet earth, the home or "habitation" (Jude 1:6) for at least a third of the angels. The angels were so filled with joy and happiness that they "sang together" and "shouted for joy" when the earth was created (Job 38:7).

1. In addition to the creation of angels, the earth and the heavens, did God also create governmental administrations? Colossians 1:16.

COMMENT: The Bible reveals that God placed the great archangel Lucifer on a throne on earth to administer God’s government over the angels who were placed here. God’s Law, by which Lucifer was to rule, is a way of life. It is the way of love—outgoing concern for the welfare of others— the way of peace, harmony, helping, serving, sharing.

2. Did Lucifer continue to administer God’s government on earth according to God’s Law? Or did he rebel and thereby sin greatly? Ezekiel 28:12-15;Isaiah 14:12-14.(The "king of Tyrus," as succeeding verses in Ezekiel 28:1-26 show, refers to Lucifer, now Satan, the evil spirit being who inspired the human "prince of Tyrus"—Ezekiel 28:2) Who followed Lucifer in his rebellion? Revelation 12:3-4.

COMMENT: The archangel Lucifer rebelled against God. Instead of continuing to administer the government of God on earth, he became a traitor. In his rebellion, one-third of all the angels followed him in his unsuccessful attempt to invade and take over God’s headquarters in heaven and dethrone the very Creator God Himself! Lucifer was renamed "Satan," which means "adversary," and the angels who followed him in this attempted coup became "demons."

3. Did the beautiful and majestic earth become waste and empty, chaotic and in confusion as a result of Lucifer’s sin? Genesis 1:2.

COMMENT: The Hebrew words for "without form and void" are tohu and bohu, which mean "chaotic and in confusion," "waste and empty." The words tohu and bohu are also used in Jeremiah 4:23,Isaiah 24:10 and Isaiah 34:11.In each of these scriptures the condition of chaos and confusion was a result of sin.

4. In Genesis 1:2 we find the earth in chaos and confusion. Is that the way God created it? Isaiah 45:18.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word translated "in vain" in Isaiah 45:18 is tohu. This is the identical word used in Genesis 1:2,meaning confusion, emptiness or waste—in this case a result of rebellion against God’s government and His Law. In Isaiah 45:18 we have the plain statement that God created the earth NOT "tohu," that is, NOT in confusion, Not in disorder. But in Genesis 1:2,the earth "was," or the earth became—as it ought to be translated—chaotic and in confusion!

5. What does Genesis 19:26 tell us that further proves the earth became something it was not when originally created by God?

COMMENT: The same Hebrew word translated "was" in Genesis 1:2 is translated "became" in Genesis 19:26.There it clearly refers to a changed condition. So the word "was" in Genesis 1:2 denotes a condition that was different from a former condition. In other words, the earth "became" something it had not always been before. The Rotherham translation of Genesis 1:2 reads as follows: "Now the earth had become waste and wild." It hadn’t always been that way!

God did not create the earth in a state of confusion, topsy-turvy and chaotic. 1 Corinthians 14:33 states that "God is not the author of confusion." But the devil is! God is the author of peace, of order and of law.

God would not have created the earth in disorder, chaos and in confusion just to straighten it out. That doesn’t make sense!

6. After the destruction of the earth’s surface resulting from the sin of the angels, did God then recreate the surface of the earth and make it habitable for plant, animal and human life? Psalms 104:30.Also read Genesis 1:1-31, noticing especially Genesis 1:26.

COMMENT: After Lucifer’s rebellion caused the ruination of a perfect earth, God set out to renew the surface of the earth, making it a place fit for human life.

God then undertook the most stupendous creation of all—that of reproducing Himself through human beings! The ultimate creation of God Beings as members of His divine Family, superior to angels, will be the crowning pinnacle of God’s creative power—the zenith of all divine accomplishment!

God reproducing Himself is a project so transcendently and incredibly awesome it is hard for the human mind to grasp. The great God—who is self-existent, before all else, Creator of all else—is in the process of reproducing Himself, creating what will ultimately be millions of others like Himself. God’s Sons will each be divine, powerful and perfect in character—each by his own free choice perfectly like-minded with the Father, having so set himself that he will not—cannot—sin! (1 John 3:9.) To accomplish this incredibly awesome feat, God first made man from the dust of the ground in His own "likeness." This was so that humans, upon God’s call to repentance and begettal by the Holy Spirit, could begin to develop the character of God while still flesh and blood. Then, at the resurrection, they will be changed to immortality and given powerful spirit-composed bodies like that of the Creator God Himself!

7. After God’s plan for humanity is complete, will He then create new heavens and a new earth? Isaiah 65:17;Revelation 21:1-5.

COMMENT: The chaos caused by Lucifer’s rebellion can be seen throughout our solar system. Apparently the rest of our galaxy and the entire universe have been affected as well. But God will one day make all things new! In the meantime, God has made the earth a habitable place for man. Yet, He has allowed the devastation, clearly visible on other planets (as evidenced by photos of pockmarked landscapes taken by deep space probes) and in space debris, to remain as mute testimony to the results of sin—of going contrary to God’s government and His way of life.

8. Did Isaiah clearly indicate that the government of God will expand not only on the earth, but eventually to other parts of our galaxy and even throughout the universe? Isaiah 9:6-7.

COMMENT: God promises there will be no end to the increase of His government! Peace, harmony, happiness and eternal joy will spread throughout the universe. But only those who develop God’s righteous character and are born into His divine Family will become part of His government, prophesied to soon be restored on this earth.

Duality Principle in Creation The Bible reveals there is duality in God’s creative process—including the creation of godly character within man.

First, it is important to understand that the angels were created in two stages. The duality principle is seen in their creation as well as in the creation of the earth and of man.

God created the angels with minds—with the ability to think, know, reason and make choices. But their creation could not be a finished creation until character—either good or evil—was developed in them. This is a process requiring time and experience. That character development was the second stage of their creation. God initially instructed the angels in His way of righteous character. It is the way of God's spiritual Law—the basis of God's government.

Then came the time of the creation of the physical universe. Here again we find the duality principle involved.

God's physical creation can be compared to unfinished furniture sold in stores. Such furniture may be of fine quality, but it lacks the finishing touches—it needs to be sanded, then lacquered, varnished or painted. At the time God created the heavens and the earth—the universe with its countless galaxies containing solar systems and attendant planets— they, like unfinished furniture, were not yet complete. They were a perfect, orderly creation, but more was yet to be done before that original creation would be finished!

Now we come to a double duality in the creation of the angels and of the earth.

God's Word tells us the earth was inhabited by angels prior to the creation of man. Scripture indicates that God placed at least a third of the angels on earth, They were given the opportunity to share in finishing the earth—working with its many elements to improve, beautify and complete it. This required harmonious teamwork—all working together toward the common God-ordained goal. God intended the earth to be the "proving ground" to qualify the angels—by righteous character development and by finishing earth's creation—to participate with Him in the ultimate completion of the billions of planets of the vast universe!

1. Whom did God place in authority on earth to regulate this angelic effort and to administer the government of God over the angels? Read Ezekiel 28:13 and Isaiah 14:12-14 once again.

COMMENT: We learned that Lucifer ultimately turned against God and sinned. And when Lucifer (now Satan) sinned, the government of God and His Law—the means of building and instilling righteous, holy, perfect character—were abolished from the earth.

2. When Jesus Christ returns to earth, will He restore all things, including the government and Law of God over all the world? Acts 3:20-21;Isaiah 2:2-3;Isaiah 11:9.

COMMENT: The government of God leads those under it into God's way of life, which is the way of His Law. It is the way that develops righteous, holy and perfect character. It is the way that produces peace, harmony, happiness, joy and abundance. It is the way of love. Therefore the government of God must, and will, be restored on earth! That is uppermost in God's mind.

3. What was the first step in God's plan to restore His government on the earth? Turn to and read Genesis 1:26 once again.

COMMENT: God created man to have rule over the earth. God's purpose in creating man was to: (1) restore the government of God upon the earth; (2) complete the physical creation of earth, which the angels had turned to ruin; (3) in the process, complete the creation of man by developing righteous spiritual character in him; and (4) establish the Kingdom of God, which will become composed of countless divine God Beings, who will eventually finish the creation of the

vast universe. This supreme purpose required that man reject Satan’s way and embrace God’s way of love, based on God’s spiritual Law. It required that man first be made of matter so that if he was led into Satan’s way he could be changed—"converted" to God’s way of love through repentance, baptism and the receipt of the Holy Spirit. This was absolutely necessary because spirit, once a finished creation (like the character of those angels who became evil) cannot be changed! Spirit is constant and eternal—not subject to change. But physical matter is constantly changing and therefore capable of further change. The first human was created with the potential of qualifying to replace Satan as the world’s ruler under God, thus restoring the government and Law of God to this earth. But it was necessary that Adam first resist and reject Satan’s "get" way and choose to live the way of God’s Law—the way of God’s love, which is the "give" way.

After creating Adam and Eve, their Maker—who is the Source of all wisdom and knowledge—instructed them in the government and Law of God, (The account in Genesis 2:1-25 reveals only a very condensed summary of God’s instruction.) Satan was restrained from any contact with them until God first had taught them what they needed to know.

4. What was some of the most important knowledge God revealed to Adam and Eve? Genesis 2:8-9,Genesis 2:15-17.

COMMENT: In the gloriously beautiful Garden of Eden, in which God placed Adam and Eve, were two trees with great symbolic meaning. One was the "tree of life." Taking its fruit, freely offered by God, symbolized obedience and faithfulness to God’s Law of outgoing love. Partaking of its fruit also symbolized receiving the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, which spiritually begets one into God’s Family. Spiritual understanding would also be granted through the Holy Spirit. The other tree with great symbolic meaning was the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Taking its fruit would be taking to themselves the knowledge of what is good and what is evil—of deciding for themselves what is right and what is sin. This, of course, meant the rejection of God’s Law, which defines right and wrong. And this would result in death!

5. Did Adam, the first man, qualify to replace Satan as earth’s ruler? Genesis 3:1-6,Genesis 3:17-19, Genesis 3:22-24.

COMMENT: The glorious archangel Lucifer, as God originally created him, was the pinnacle of God’s creative power in a single being. Few today remotely realize Satan’s great power, now turned to cunning deception. The wily devil got to Adam through his wife Eve. He did not say, "Choose my way." Appearing to her as a serpent, he said, "Choose your own way," cleverly deceiving her. Adam, who was not deceived, nevertheless chose to follow Satan’s way also. And mankind everafter has followed the way of Satan. Adam thus failed to restore God’s government and failed to replace Satan as ruler of the world. But God is now in the process, as understood by the duality principle of creation, of creating more God Beings for His Family. God realized that if a third of the angels could choose the way that resulted in evil character, it left Him and the other member of the God Family as the only Beings in existence who could be relied upon to never deviate from His government and His Law—His way of life.

God realized He needed thousands of millions of perfect and righteous beings, ruled by His government, to complete in beauty, majesty and glory not only the other planets of our solar system, but also of our Milky Way galaxy, and the countless other galaxies of the vast, limitless

universe. So, about 4,000 years after Adam’s sin, came the next phase of God’s awesome purpose of reproducing Himself into billions of God Beings!

6. Notice now the duality principle with regard to Jesus Christ. How is Jesus referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:45?

COMMENT: The "first" Adam was the first man, created by God from the dust of the ground. The second or "last Adam" was Jesus, who also was made flesh and blood, but who became an immortal being by a resurrection, thus completing in Himself the second phase—the spiritual phase—of God’s creation of mankind. In God’s Master Plan for His spiritual creation of mankind, it had been determined by God and the Word that the Word would in due time divest Himself of His supreme glory and be born as the human Jesus Christ. This would make possible the spiritual phase of the creation of man—God reproducing Himself—God creating in man His very own holy, righteous and perfect character!

What a marvelous plan for the ultimate in creative accomplishment! How great is our God in mind, purpose, planning, designing as well as creating—from the tiniest germ to the greatest sun, and ultimately, other God Beings! The incredible human potential is that the great majestic God is, in man, reproducing Himself. Man can literally be born into the God Family!

7. Did Jesus Christ, the second Adam, qualify to replace Satan and restore God’s government on earth? Matthew 4:1-11;Matthew 28:18.

COMMENT: Christ qualified to be the Supreme King over all the earth by overcoming Satan’s way and obeying God perfectly. He will depose Satan and restore God’s government when He returns. But in the meantime, He is acting as our High Priest, helping us to qualify as co-rulers with Him—helping us to resist Satan and to build righteous character in preparation for our future spiritual birth into the God Family.

8. How did Jesus speak of this spiritual birth? John 3:3-8.COMMENT: Once again we see the duality principle in action in describing the creation of Sons of God. Man’s first birth is into the human family, which is composed of flesh and blood. His second birth will be into the divine Family of God, which is composed of spirit, and which possesses perfect, holy, righteous character!

God’s Character Revealed

Why is it so important for us to know who and what God is? Because God’s glorious purpose for our existence is that we ultimately become like Him! When God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, he was made in the "likeness"—the outward form and shape—of God Himself. This unique form and shape was given to man alone. At his creation, man was also given the gift of intellect—the ability to think, to reason, to make choices and decisions. This God-like attribute of mind and character was not given to any animal. Man possesses these unique characteristics and abilities because he was created with the potential to become God! For God to complete the spiritual creation of mankind as God Beings, we must learn to think more and more like God does, developing His attitude and character while flesh-and-blood human beings. Then, when resurrected or changed into immortal spirit, we will be eternal members in God’s Family, possessing the supreme character and awesome powers of God! Our purpose in human life, then, is that we grow in God’s character, But what, exactly, is the character of God? The character of

both God the Father and Christ the Son is that of spiritual holiness, righteousness and absolute perfection. That character can be summed up in the word love, defined as an out-flowing concern for others. It is the way of "give," of serving, helping, sharing—the opposite of the "get" way of Satan the devil.

It is the way devoid of all coveting, lust and greed, vanity and selfishness, competition, strife, violence and destruction, envy and jealousy, resentment and bitterness.

God’s inherent nature is the way of peace, justice, mercy, happiness and joy radiating outward toward those He has created. God is the embodiment of perfect, holy and righteous character!

Since God possesses perfect, righteous character, He will never sin! God will not go contrary to the perfect, holy, spiritual Law He set in living, active, inexorable motion to cause and produce all good. God has so set His will that He cannot sin, or transgress His Law (1 John 3:9).

1. How does the Bible define the nature and character of God? 1 John 4:8,16, What is the love of God? 1 John 5:3.

COMMENT: The spiritual Law of God enables us to know what God is like because it describes His character, which is summed up by the word LOVE!

2. How did Jesus summarize the Law of God? Matthew 22:36-40.

COMMENT: God’s Law is further defined in the two Great Commandments: LOVE to God and LOVE to neighbor. God’s Law is further divided into ten points by the Ten Commandments. The first four tell us how to love God, and the last six tell us how to love our neighbor—all fellow human beings.

3. What very important thing was Jesus prophesied to do regarding God’s Law? Isaiah 42:21.What are two examples of how Jesus "magnified" the Ten Commandments? Matthew 5:21-22,Matthew 5:27-28.

COMMENT: When a spiritual "magnifying glass," so to speak, is put on the Ten Commandments, they are enlarged in spiritual principle into many more points. And in a larger sense, the entire Bible is a magnification of God’s Law. The Law is the basis of all Scripture. It defines God’s way of life—the way to peace, success, happiness, joy and eternal life. Notice how like God His Law really is.

4. Is the Law of God good? Romans 7:12.

COMMENT: God is good!

5. Is the Law of God just? Romans 7:12.

COMMENT: God is just!

6. Is the Law of God holy? Romans 7:12.

COMMENT: God is holy!

7. Is the Law of God spiritual? Romans 7:14.

COMMENT: God is spiritual!

8. Is the Law of God perfect? Psalms 19:7.

COMMENT: God is perfect!

9. Will the character of God ever change? Malachi 3:6;Hebrews 13:8.Therefore, is the Law of God—including all His commandments—unchanging and eternal, standing fast forever and ever? Psalms 111:7-8.

COMMENT: God is eternal and so is His Law, for the Law expresses the very character, the very nature, of God!

God's Law travels in the direction of His character. It is the way of LOVE. It is the way of giving, serving, helping, God has that character! He has an outgoing concern for all of humanity, He gave His only begotten Son to reconcile us to Him, thereby making the joys of His character and everlasting life possible for us. He showers on us every good and precious gift, including the Holy Spirit, which we can receive as a begettal from the Father after we repent and turn from the wrong way of Satan's world, begin to resist it, and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior!

10. What are some of the divine characteristics or "fruits" of God's nature that begin to be exhibited by God's children after their begettal by His Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23;2 Timothy 1:7.

COMMENT: Righteous, holy, godly character is the possession and practice of love, joy, patience, mercy, faith, kindness, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-restraint and right self-direction. Character also involves knowledge, wisdom, purpose and ability—all properly controlled and developed through independent choice.

11. Is love the greatest single attribute of God's nature? 1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13. Why? 1 John 4:16.How can we have this divine love? Romans 5:5.

COMMENT: We can have the Father's love if we have His Spirit and keep His commandments—strive to live the way He, Himself, lives.

There are just two possible ways of life: God's way, or God's Law, summed up in the Ten Commandments, which we call the "give" way; and Satan's way of competition, greed and vanity, which we call the "get" way. This is the way of disobedience to God. All suffering—all unhappiness, fear, misery and death—has come from living by Satan's way of "get," instead of living by God's way of "give," which is the only way to peace, happiness and joy.

One-third of the angels failed to develop the godly character that would have guaranteed them everlasting peace and happiness. They believed Satan's way of "get" was better than God's way of "give," and therefore developed evil character. The rebellious Lucifer was no longer qualified to be ruler of the earth. Someone had to qualify to replace him. So God created Adam and gave him the opportunity to develop the godly character required of a righteous ruler. But Adam failed. So Adam's descendants—all mankind—have been born in Satan's world of competition, strife and violence, and have been allowed to transgress God's Law. God has allowed this for a great purpose. He wants man to learn, through experience—and experience requires time—that Satan's

way of "get," which is disobedience to God's spiritual Law, causes only misery, suffering, heartache and death.

Those who are called of God and voluntarily choose to reject and resist Satan's way and live a life of obedience to God are developing the holy, righteous, perfect character of God. Thus they are qualifying to rule and reign with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who will REPLACE Satan as world ruler at His soon return to RESTORE the government of God to the entire earth!

God Now Creating His Supreme Masterpiece!

What is the most important creation the Creator God could produce? Was it the angels? Was it the heavens and the earth—the entire universe? Or was it the first man? It was none of these! The supreme pinnacle of God's creative works is the creation of His very own perfect, holy, righteous character within His created living beings! But this is something that even God with His supreme power cannot do of Himself by divine fiat or command! Yes, there is actually something that even God cannot do—by Himself, alone.

King David mused on God's purpose for man: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained"—great, vast in size and distance—works of God's creation. David then asked, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalms 8:3-4.)

Even one hundred thousand people, assembled in a large stadium, look like tiny insignificant ants when seen from several thousand feet above, Yes, why should God be mindful of insignificant man? In Hebrews chapter 2 this same psalm is quoted, and there God's Word proceeds to reveal that in man God has determined to complete the very pinnacle of perfection in all His creation! The creation of God's own perfect and righteous spiritual character in man is the SUPREME GOAL of God—His ultimate purpose for mankind! Yet, God cannot do this alone—all by Himself, Man must have his own part in this supreme masterpiece of all creation. The creation of character within individual beings requires the existence of mind within those beings—the ability to reason and make decisions. Of all living things and beings God has created, only two—angels and humans—have that ability. It is, therefore, only in angels and humans that God's perfect spiritual character may be formed.

Perfect spiritual character is the ability of a separately created entity with mind and independent free choice to come to the knowledge of the right (God's "give" way) as opposed to the wrong (Satan's "get" way), to decide and will to do the right, even against desires or pulls to do the wrong, and finally overcome pulls toward the wrong until doing the right becomes a fixed habit or characteristic of one's nature.

Now consider: In the original creation of angels, it was impossible for God to build or create this character in them by divine fiat. That would have made them mere automatons or machines—it would not have been character.

Therefore the creation of angels could not be finished—complete—until character, either righteous or evil, had been formed and instilled within them by their own decision and will.

After Lucifer and one-third of the angels rebelled, the creation of these angels was finished—they created evil character within themselves! Once their fateful course had been set, their creation

was complete. And, being immortal spirit, they can never change. The character of both God the Father and Christ the Son, which Lucifer and one-third of the angels failed to develop, is that of spiritual holiness, righteousness and absolute perfection—the way of God's Law. God will never sin or transgress His Law. And He is now in the process of creating this same godly character in Spirit-begotten Christians as they, by their own choice, and with the help of God's Holy Spirit, live His righteous way of life! The previous four lessons of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course reveal the ways and means by which God creates His perfect, sinless character within those He has called, (You'll find it profitable to review these lessons after completing this lesson.) Lesson 9 shows that those who have been developing evil character by sinning (and all, except Christ, have sinned—Romans 3:23), must first repent of having broken God's holy, righteous Law. Then they must be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), as Lesson 10 thoroughly explains.

Next, God's Word promises that those who repent of their sins and are baptized will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from God, granting them the spiritual power and understanding necessary for righteous character development. Lesson 11 covers this subject in great detail.

Lesson 12 shows how Christians, who have thus been begotten by the Spirit of God, are to be developing and growing in God's holy, righteous character. Spiritual character growth results from following God's way of life as revealed in the Bible. Lesson 12 explains what God's way—the Christian way of life—is all about.

Finally, at the resurrection to eternal life, the supreme masterpiece of God's creation will have been finished! Those whom God has called and who have voluntarily chosen to work with their Creator in completing His supreme creation within them while flesh and blood will at last be a "finished" creation—created in God's own spiritual "image" with His perfect, righteous, holy character—eternal members of His divine ruling Family!

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The religions of this world A. worship the true God in their own varied ways. B. have many different doctrines, but agree on the nature of God. C. do not know who and what God is. D. are not in a state of religious confusion.

2. Evolutionary science and secular education A. publicly acknowledge that God exists. B. understand who and what God is. C. have reluctantly taught the theory of evolution. D. neither know of nor teach the existence of a Creator God.

3. Evolution is A. the most logical explanation of how the universe and life on earth came to be. B. the attempt to explain the existence of a creation without a Creator. C. a theory that does not

require faith to believe. D. not a widely accepted or believed theory.

4. The record in the Bible which gives the very earliest account of the existence of God is found in A. John 1:1-3.B. Genesis 1:1.C. Hebrews 1:1-2.D. Isaiah 57:15.

5. How many God Personages have existed for eternity? A. One—God. B. Two—"God" and the "Word." C. Three—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. D. We can't really know.

6. The "Word" mentioned in the first chapter of John A. was never the "Spokesman" of the God family. B. was eternal spirit and therefore could not become flesh and blood. C. became the human Jesus Christ. D. was the Holy Spirit.

7. Hebrews, chapter seven, refers to the preexistence of Jesus Christ. By which of the following names or titles was He not known in times past? A. Melchisedec B. Priest of the Most High God C. King of Righteousness D. Methuselah

8. Jesus Christ's life was worth more than all other human lives combined because he was A. the Creator of all human life. B. a very good man. C. born of a virgin who had never been intimate with men. D. a member of the Trinity.

9. What does God look like? A. Totally unlike man. B. Like a man. C. Unlike anything in the physical creation. D. A shapeless ethereal cloud.

10. Emperor Constantine of Rome A. kept out of religious matters during his reign. B. was a member of the true Church of God. C. understood that God is a family presently composed of two divine Personages. D. made belief in the Trinity doctrine mandatory.

11. Does the Bible teach that God is a Trinity? A. Yes, the proof is in 1 John 5:7-8.B. No, part of the wording of 1 John 5:7-8 was added in the fourth century. C. No, but by faith we know the Trinity must exist. D. It must since so many believe in this doctrine.

12. Why is the truth about the Trinity so important? A. The Trinity doctrine completely does away with the Gospel Christ preached. B. This false teaching limits the number of members of God's family to only three—with no possibility of expansion. C. Through this erroneous belief, Satan wants to hide the fact that God is reproducing Himself. D. All of the above.

13. God created all things by A. Himself since He is all powerful. B. the Spirit of God only. C. the Word (Jesus Christ), the Workman who "spoke" and it was done by the power of the Spirit of God. D. His angels.

14. What did God create first? A. The angels. B. Adam, the first man. C. The earth. D. The universe.

15. When God originally created the heavens and the earth, A. they were a finished creation. B. they were in a state of disarray. C. they were "very good" and in order, but unfinished. D. He had no purpose for them.

16. Why were Lucifer and the angels placed on earth? A. To rest, relax and enjoy its beauty. B. To defend the planet from the demons. C. Certainly not to develop righteous character. D. To share in finishing its creation.

17. God originally intended that His angels A. become members of His family. B. develop holy, righteous character. C. learn to rule the universe on their own. D. do nothing of any significance for the rest of eternity.

18. How did the beautiful earth become waste and empty, chaotic and in confusion? A. Through God’s neglect. B. Through man’s neglect. C. as a result of Lucifer’s rebellion against God. D. Through nuclear warfare.

19. Why must the government of God be restored on earth? A. Because it leads those under it into God’s way of life which produces peace, harmony and happiness. B. Because it leads those under it into righteous character development. C. Because it is the administration of God’s law of love. D. All of the above.

20. Which of the following is not God’s purpose for creating man? A. That man become no higher than the angels. B. The development of God’s righteous character in man. C. That man may be born into God’s family as sons of God. D. That man would eventually complete the creation of earth.

21. The "give" way and the "get" way A. are not mentioned in principle in the Bible. B. are not opposite ways of life. C. are clearly understood by this world. D. simply describe God’s way and Satan’s way.

22. What word does the Bible use to sum up God’s character? A. Cruel B. Vengeful C. Love D. Heartless

23. The Ten Commandments A. reflect the character of God. B. can be summed up in the word love. C. are God’s way of life. D. All of the above.

24. How can God’s love be in us? A. By receiving His Holy Spirit. B. By following our own personal moral values and way of looking at things. C. By following Satan’s "get" way of life. D. By rejecting God’s "give" way of life.

25. The supreme creative effort of God-His ultimate purpose— A. was the creation of the archangel Lucifer. B. was the creation of physical man with all his remarkable abilities. C. is the creation of His own perfect, holy, righteous spiritual character in man. D. was the creation of the vast universe.

Lesson 14

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 14

Angels Your Bible reveals that angels inhabited the earth long before Adam and Eve. But these angels sinned! What was the CAUSE of their sin? And what about the righteous angels— what are they doing today? GOD is the Creator. God has existed from eternity. WHO and WHAT God is we learned in the last lesson. In John 1:1 we read: "In the beginning was the Word...," that is, the Personage called the Word. He is the Spokesman. "And the Word was with God...." God, then, is another Personage. There are actually two persons revealed in John 1:1.But notice further:

"And the Word was God." The Word also is God and "all things were made by him..." (John 1:3). In the Word was LIFE (John 1:4).

These verses in John 1:1-51 speak of none other than the two eternal members of the GOD KINGDOM. There is "God" who became the Father, and the "Word" who became Christ. They have life inherent. And they lived with each other. How did they live? The way of LOVE!

God loved the Word. He said of the Word after He became Jesus the Christ: "My beloved Son...." And the Son loved and obeyed the Father. This love—this WAY OF LIFE—was the attitude that guided what they both did. The Creation of Angels

What did the God Family Do? What is their occupation? God is CREATOR. But even before creating the physical universe, God first created angels. As both members of the God Family have eternal LIFE inherent within themselves, so the Word imparted life to the angels when He created them. They had life inherent—self-contained life within themselves. The angels served at the throne of God in heaven. Two of them, with the rank of cherub, were trained at the headquarters of God in heaven and spread their wings over God’s very throne (Ezekiel 28:14). One of those two was Lucifer.

Later the Word created the earth at the same time as the rest of the universe (Genesis 1:1). Over the earth God set His government. He placed under Him angels, apparently a third of them, on our planet (Job 38:4-7;Isaiah 14:14;Revelation 12:4)to develop, beautify and complete the creation. But how were these angels to accomplish their purpose on earth? How were they to get along successfully with one another and be happy? What was to regulate their conduct toward their Creator and toward each other? God’s government over them!

Since God is Creator, God governs, rules, and determines the way of life of created intelligent beings. God’s government directs those under it into His way of life which is love, cooperation and outgoing concern for others. To administer God’s government on earth, He set the great archangel Lucifer on a throne over the whole earth (Isaiah 14:12-14).

God’s Law of Love

All government is based on a foundational law or constitution. And the constitution or basic law of God’s government is the Law of God—the way of life by which the two members of the God Family live! God’s government is simply the administration of God s WAY OF LIFE.

God’s Law can be summed up in the one word love (Romans 13:10). This is because God’s very nature is LOVE (1 John 4:16), and God’s Law reflects His loving character. And so the government of God is the application of the PRINCIPLE of LOVE. The love of God is out-flowing toward others. God is concerned about the good and the welfare of others. God’s love is the attitude of cooperation, serving, helping. It is the way of "give" instead of "get."

God has always loved the Word and the Word has always loved God. The Father, as we have noted, said of the Word when He became Christ, "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17). The Son loves and obeys the Father who has always been in charge (John 8:28-29;John 15:10). The two have lived in harmony from eternity (John 10:30). The LOVE they have for each other—this WAY OF LIFE—is the attitude motivating everything the God Family does.

Lucifer Rejects God’s Law The Law of God applies in principle to angels the same as to man. The principle underlying God’s Law remains the same—love toward God and love toward one another. The Bible clearly tells us that the angels who were placed on earth abandoned the way of love and sinned (2 Peter 2:4). Sin is the transgression of God’s Law of LOVE—the way of peace, cooperation and harmony—the way of giving as opposed to the way of getting.

Lucifer allowed VANITY to lead him into the attitudes of coveting, envy, jealousy, competition. He began to live the way of "get" instead of God’s way of "give." So Lucifer rejected God and His Law of love. Thus the government of God ceased to be administered on earth.

Lucifer finally organized a third of God’s angels into an army and ascended to heaven in an attempt to "take" rulership of the universe away from God. But they were repelled and cast back to earth. As a result, the earth became "without form and void" (Genesis 1:2). It became a darkened, ruined planet!

Let’s learn the full story of what happened and the steps God is taking to restore His government—His way of life—to the entire earth. Then we’ll see what the righteous angels are doing today and how we can be protected from the wiles of the Devil and his demons. But before we begin this important study, get your Bible so you can turn to all the Scriptures given in answer to the questions in this lesson. You will also find it very profitable to copy these verses into a notebook. This will not only enable you to review your studies at any time in the future, it will also help make these Scriptures become a part of your very being. Now let’s begin this lesson!

Lesson 14 Lucifer Rebels Against God’s Government When God placed angels on the earth, He set a great archangel over them to administer the government of God. This archangel’s original name in Hebrew meant "Light-Bringer"—"Lucifer" was his name in Latin.

Lucifer was an awesome spirit being of majestic beauty, dazzling brightness, great knowledge, power, intellect and wisdom. But Lucifer sinned!

Two Biblical passages—Isaiah 14:1-32 and Ezekiel 28:1-26--tell us of Lucifer’s original created state and his great sin.

1. Was Lucifer one of the anointed cherubs who covered God’s throne? Ezekiel 28:14;Exodus 25:18-20.

COMMENT: In Exodus 25:1-40 is recorded God’s instruction to Moses giving the pattern of the Ark of the Covenant that was to be made for the tabernacle. The description of this unique chest begins with Exodus 25:10. On its top, as Exodus 25:17-21 show, was to be the mercy seat which depicted the very throne of God in heaven—the headquarters of the government of God over the whole universe. Two cherubs, or cherubim, were to be stationed at the mercy seat, one on each side. Their wings were to cover this likeness of God’s throne.

Lucifer, then, had been stationed at the very throne of God (Ezekiel 28:14). He was trained in the administration of God’s government before God placed him in charge of angels on earth.

2. Did the former Lucifer decide to leave the earth and ascend to heaven in an attempt to exalt his throne (which was in Eden, the garden of God) above all the angels ("stars") of God? Ezekiel 28:13;Isaiah 14:12-14.

3. Did Lucifer actually want to be like the Most High God? Isaiah 14:14.COMMENT: It is apparent that Lucifer had nothing less in mind than knocking the Creator God off His throne and becoming the Supreme Ruler himself!

Here was the supreme masterpiece of God’s creative power, as an individually created being, turning on his own Creator—as a Frankenstein monster attempting to destroy its own maker—in an attempt to assume all power to rule the vast universe! His would not have been a government based on the principles of God’s LOVE—of giving, of outgoing concern for the good of others—but rather based on competition, self-centeredness, vanity, lust and greed; on envy, jealousy, hatred, violence and destruction; on spiritual darkness and error, instead of light and truth; on ugliness instead of beauty.

4. Lucifer, the super archangel, was perfect in all his ways from the day of his creation until something happened in him. What was found in him? Ezekiel 28:15.Did he become vain? Did he corrupt his wisdom? Ezekiel 28:17.

COMMENT: When Lucifer began thinking thoughts of competition, vanity, envy, lust and. greed, then thoughts of resentment and rebellion, his ability to think rationally changed. His mind became perverted, distorted, twisted. His thinking became totally warped!

Lucifer was no longer satisfied with rule over only the one planet. He wanted to rule the universe! He said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars [angels] of God..." (Isaiah 14:13). Thus Lucifer became the first rebel—the first sinner!

Lucifer subtly, perhaps very, very gradually, subverted the angels over whom God had placed him until he succeeded in turning their minds to rebellion. (This, incidentally, might have taken Lucifer a very long time, perhaps millions of years—the Bible does not say.) Lucifer made the angels feel dissatisfied and wronged by God, injecting resentment and bitterness into their minds.

5. What happened to Lucifer’s and his angels’ attempt to wrest control of the universe from their Creator? Isaiah 14:12;Revelation 12:3-4.How did Jesus describe Satan’s fall from heaven? Luke 10:18.

COMMENT: Lucifer deliberately became his Maker's adversary. That was his choice, not God's—yet God allowed it! And so God changed his name to what he became—SATAN—which means adversary, competitor, enemy. And the angels who were cast back down to the earth with him became known as demons.

Earth Becomes a Ruined Planet!

God's Law is the basis of God's government. And as we learned in our previous studies, SIN is the transgression of God's Law (1 John 3:4). We also learned that sin carries penalties. Notice what was the cataclysmic effect of the sin of angels.

1. Does the Bible plainly state that angels sinned? 2 Peter 2:4.COMMENT: Can you imagine angels becoming sinning angels? Yet that is what God reveals. And since sin is the transgression of God's Law, these angels transgressed—rebelled—against GOD'S LAW OF LOVE—the very foundation of God's government—God's way of life!

2. Does the Bible clearly show that worldwide sin brings worldwide destruction? 2 Peter 2:5-6;Genesis 6:5-13.

COMMENT: These verses in Genesis 6:5-13 show that worldwide, human sin brought worldwide destruction to the earth's surface! All flesh worldwide had sinned. Only Noah found grace and forgiveness in God's sight. Only Noah "walked with God." So the Flood destroyed all human life on earth, except for Noah and his family.

Later, the homosexuality and other sins of Sodom and Gomorrha spread over the entire territory of those two cities. And so physical, fiery destruction came from God to the entire area and destroyed everything! The sin of the angels, which occurred before man was created, was worldwide; therefore the effect of their sin upon the earth was also worldwide. The universal, worldwide sin of the angels who "kept not their first estate [the earth], but left their own habitation..." (Jude 1:6), resulted in the physical destruction of the entire face of the earth! But how?

God created the earth to be used, maintained, improved and beautified. This use is regulated by God's Law. When the angels rebelled against God, the Law of His government ceased to be administered on earth. And so the preservation of the physical earth and all its original beauty and glory also ceased. The result was decay and finally darkness on the face of the earth!

Lucifer was created a perfect bringer of LIGHT. Now he became the author of DARKNESS, error, confusion and evil.

3. How does the Bible describe the extreme cataclysmic conditions on the earth which resulted from the angels' sin? Genesis 1:2.(Review in Lesson 13 the conditions on earth brought about by Lucifer's rebellion. Lesson 13 explains the meaning of the Hebrew words tohu and bohu, which are translated "without form, and void" in Genesis 1:2.)

COMMENT: By now you might be wondering if God knew, in advance, that Lucifer and the angels under him would sin and cause this earth-wide destruction. After all, doesn't God know everything? The answer is NO! If God were to decide to know in advance what choice they would make, He would have had to "program" their minds to do so and thus force them to make it. Instead, God gave these spirit beings, as He also gives all human beings, the power to think for

themselves—to reason, to choose, to make decisions. Otherwise they, and we, would be mere automatons doing what we were preset or made to do!

God chose to make angels, and later humans, free moral agents—capable of free choice. Otherwise neither angels nor humans could develop righteous character.

God bestowed upon angels minds of their own possessing great knowledge—superior to that possessed by man. One might suppose that, endowed with such great knowledge, they would never choose wrongly, or commit sin.

Yet a third of all the angels did transgress! Their great knowledge did not prevent rebellion, sin, and worldwide chaos and destruction. They turned from God’s way of life to vanity, lust and greed, jealousy and envy, competition leading to strife, violence, war. They came to resent God’s rule over them. They chose to follow their own way—the way of "get"—and rejected God’s way—the way of "give." Thus by this deliberate choice they formed within themselves evil character. But God did not leave planet earth in a state of decay and ruin after Lucifer’s rebellion. God set about to restore the earth so it could support human life—the next step in His plan—as described in Genesis chapter one. A Successor Had to Qualify At this point in our study we must understand a basic principle of God’s government—that the state can never be without a head.

Originally, God placed Lucifer over God’s government on earth. When he rebelled against God he ceased to administer the government of God and disqualified himself from further rulership in God’s government. But he (his name now changed to Satan) must remain on that throne over the earth until his successor who has qualified to replace him has been inducted into office! The very fact that Satan was in the Garden of Eden to tempt the first humans—that he is even now "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4)and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)who had "all the kingdoms of the world" to give to Christ (Matthew 4:8)--is sufficient evidence of this basic principle of succession in God’s government. When Lucifer turned to rebellion and a third of the angels followed him, it became obvious that only the two members of the God Family would not and could not sin. The next step for God was to begin reproducing Himself through human beings who would, once BORN of God’s Spirit as very members of His divine Family, never sin or deviate from God’s government.

It was also within God’s plan that a successor qualify to replace Satan as world ruler while living on an earth still ruled by Satan. He had to withstand the temptations of Satan to prove that he would obey God instead of the Devil. And so God gave the first man, Adam, the opportunity to replace Satan. But Adam failed! The incident of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden tells the story. It is extremely important that we understand what really happened!

Why First Adam Failed to Quality

1. What kind of trees did God cause to grow in the Garden of Eden? Genesis 2:8-9.And what specific command did He give Adam regarding these trees? Genesis 2:15-17.

2. What was to happen to Adam if he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Genesis 2:17.

COMMENT: The tree of "life" and the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil" have tremendous significance for us today. These were literal trees, but they were also symbolic. The tree of life

represented the Holy Spirit of God and eternal LIFE. It also represented the way of God's government which is the spiritual Law of God. Thus by partaking of its fruit, revealed spiritual knowledge could be received and understood. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented the way of the Devil—the way of rebellion against God's government, the way of deciding for oneself right from wrong. It pictured sin and its penalty, which for man is eternal DEATH (Romans 6:23). And so God commanded Adam not to partake of the fruit of this tree of DEATH!

Let's really understand.

Adam was made from the ground and given a temporary, physiochemical existence. He did not have eternal LIFE inherent within himself. Like a wound-up clock running down, he was in the process of aging with every breath he took. At any time he was, as we might say, "only one breath away from death"—cessation of existence.

God therefore offered Adam the tree of "life," which represented God's Holy Spirit and eternal LIFE. Had Adam and Eve partaken of its fruit, they would have received God's Spirit and been begotten of Him. God does not impart immortality instantaneously. One is first begotten--impregnated by the spiritual life of God—and thus becomes an "heir" to eternal LIFE as explained in Lesson 8. God's Spirit also would have given Adam and Eve access to God's mind—His love, faith and power which lead to eternal LIFE! The Holy Spirit would have provided the strength to perfect the very character of God in them, and finally changed their mortal bodies into spirit-born members of the God Family!

God's Spirit would have also imparted spiritual knowledge, understanding and wisdom to Adam and Eve. It would have revealed an understanding of the spiritual Law of God—the way of life that leads to peace, happiness, contentment, success in life, cooperation and mutual concern for fellowman.

There are, broadly speaking, the two ways of living—exemplified by the two trees in Eden. The one is out-flowing LOVE. We term this for brevity and simplicity, the way of "give." The other, the way of "get." They are the two divergent ways of life, leading in opposite directions, producing opposite effects!

3. But did the wily Satan cleverly delude Eve into disbelieving God and disobeying His command? Genesis 3:1-7.Did the Devil lie by promising her that she had an immortal soul in a material body and would not die? Genesis 3:4.And did Satan subtly imply that God was hiding certain vital "knowledge" from her which she ought to have? Genesis 3:5-6. (Notice the words "make one wise" in Genesis 3:6) Did Adam deliberately eat of the forbidden fruit? Genesis 3:6.

4. Was Adam deceived into disbelieving God, or did he really know better? 1 Timothy 2:14.Did he nevertheless choose the way of disobedience to God by partaking of the forbidden fruit with his wife? Genesis 3:6.

COMMENT: On that first Sabbath day, the God who created the first humans and who later became Jesus Christ, instructed Adam and Eve in God's way—the way of the government of God based on the Law of God—just as Lucifer and his angels had been instructed in the ways of God's government after their creation.

Soon afterwards Satan subtly deceived Eve into disbelieving what God had taught. She took of the forbidden fruit and gave some to Adam. By taking that fruit Adam chose to disobey God's command and thus rejected God's government over them. When Adam took the forbidden fruit, he took to himself the authority to determine the spiritual knowledge of good and evil. He appropriated the prerogative of deciding what is good and evil—what is right and wrong— what is righteousness and what is sin. But Adam didn't have this ability of himself.

Adam rejected revealed spiritual knowledge from God. He made the choice that limited him to knowledge of the physical and material. He rejected the spiritual knowledge that would have produced a happy relationship with God and with fellowman. He rejected God's Holy Spirit, God's love, God's government, and eternal LIFE! He disobeyed the explicit command of his Maker. Adam SINNED and brought the penalty of sin upon himself and all his descendants! (Romans 5:12-19;Romans 6:23.) 5. What happened to the minds of Adam and Eve after they chose to follow the way of Satan? Genesis 3:7.

COMMENT: The eyes of both of them were "opened." The Devil's attitude of rebellion entered Adam's mind when he took the forbidden fruit. Satan, who is a spirit, imparted to both their minds the attitudes of vanity, of selfishness, of "get," of resentment of authority. Those characteristics we call "human nature"—the carnal mind (Romans 8:7)described in Jeremiah 17:9--come from Satan the Devil himself! (Recall that we studied this amazing revelation in Lesson 9.) 6. Were Adam and Eve denied further access to the tree of LIFE and God's Spirit? Genesis 3:22-24.

COMMENT: When Adam sinned, he cut himself off from God (Isaiah 59:2). And God cut him and his descendants off from access to the tree of LIFE. The human family was cut off from the Holy Spirit. Man, until the second Adam came, had no access to the Holy Spirit, except for a special few whom God individually called.

Second Adam Qualifies to Rule 1. Who is the "second Adam" spoken of in the Bible? 1 Corinthians 15:45-47.

2. Did Christ make the Holy Spirit and eternal LIFE available again? 1 Corinthians 15:22;John 1:4;1 Corinthians 10:10;1 Corinthians 7:37-39;1 John 5:11-12.But since Jesus' first coming, is it only those whom God the Father calls who may receive His Spirit and become one of His "firstfruits"? John 6:44;James 1:18.

COMMENT: Mankind since Adam was not offered eternal LIFE until Christ, the second Adam, established His Church and began offering LIFE to those firstfruits the Father would call before Jesus' Second Coming. Some of you, like Adam, are being offered LIFE today! And you have to choose.

We all have Satan's evil influence to contend with, so it is not easy to overcome now. But God helps us to obey Him through the power of His Spirit. Those who demonstrate that they want to follow God's way of LIFE will be His "firstfruits"—the first to have LIFE and a leadership role in God's ruling Family forever!

3. Before Jesus' human birth, did God reveal that Jesus was to become a ruler and be given a throne? Luke 1:30-33.Will there be not only no end to His government, but no end to the increase of His government? Luke 1:33; Isaiah 9:6-7.

4. After Adam failed to replace Satan as world ruler, did God reveal that a future descendant of mother Eve would conquer Satan? Genesis 3:14-15.

COMMENT: This prophecy actually foretold the birth of the second Adam who would overcome Satan—that Jesus Christ would succeed in qualifying to replace Satan ("bruise" the serpent's head) and restore the government of God on earth!

5. How did the second Adam qualify to replace Satan as ruler of this world? Matthew 4:1-11.

COMMENT: Before Jesus could replace Satan as world ruler, He had to be subjected to the supreme test to prove He would faithfully administer the government of God. As God had allowed Satan to test Adam, He now allowed him to test Jesus, but only after Jesus had fasted 40 days and nights. Under the extreme pulls of hunger, Jesus quoted and obeyed Scripture three times in resisting the Devil—HE OBEYED THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD!

Jesus proved that He was loyal and faithful to God's government and that nothing could move Him to defy or disobey it!

Jesus thus qualified to replace Satan as world ruler—to administer God's government over all nations. But Jesus was not then inducted into office.

6. After qualifying to replace Satan and to become King over the entire earth, and after His resurrection to His former glorified state, Jesus Christ returned to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Until when is Jesus scheduled to remain in heaven? Acts 3:20-21.

COMMENT: The government of God, which ceased to be administered on the earth when Lucifer and his angels rebelled, will be restored at Christ's Second Coming. Jesus Christ is coming to restore God's government over all nations—one supreme, divine government which will bring the world a "utopia" of lasting peace, prosperity and the knowledge of God's great master plan to all mankind!

7. What important work must be done before Christ's return to reestablish God's government on earth? Matthew 24:14;Mark 13:10.

COMMENT: Jesus foretold that just prior to His return He would raise up an end-time Work to proclaim to the world His coming to restore the government of God on earth (Matthew 28:19-20). For this very purpose He raised up the Worldwide Church of God through Herbert W. Armstrong, the end-time apostle of God's Church and His chief spokesman to world leaders today. And as Christ trained the apostles who in turn taught their students—disciples—to teach others, so in this end time Mr. Armstrong has established Ambassador College to teach and train students to teach others today. This Church is boldly proclaiming the truth about God's Law and coming government. Through the "World Tomorrow" television and radio broadcasts and the pages of The PLAIN TRUTH and Good News magazines, God is revealing His plan to restore His way of love, peace and joy to the world. And in addition we publish these Bible Correspondence Course lessons with which you are learning the truth of God—as it has been revealed to His chosen and faithful apostle—through a verse-by-verse study of the Bible. 6,000 Years of Satan's Rule The cause of all troubles in the world today originated in the incident of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden!

Adam, in choosing the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, chose to "go it alone" without God. As a result he got himself and his offspring into a world of trouble. Mankind has been suffering the results of that wrong decision ever since! When Adam partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he rejected God's "give" way of life. He chose instead the "get" way of Satan. God therefore set aside the first six millennial "days" of human history for a testimony to the fruits of following Satan's way of life.

What we have had, therefore, is a world of MAN'S making, with the chief architect being none other than the invisible "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)--the real "god" of this present evil world (2 Corinthians 4:4)-- Satan.

After the sin of Adam and Eve, God adopted basically a "hands-off" policy toward the world. We now have had almost 6,000 years during which humanity has been cut off from God. During this time humanity has been under the invisible and unrealized sway of Satan the Devil. Human beings have been trying to organize their own societies, their own governments and their own religions according to the way that seems right to man, but which has led to DEATH! (Proverbs 14:12.)

During this period God has not attempted to save the world spiritually (Hebrews 9:27). All who have lived and died without understanding the truth of God will yet come into future judgment, in a resurrection to physical life at the end of the 1,000 years. Only Abel, Enoch, and Noah are recorded as having turned to God's way during the first 1,900 or so years. After the Flood Abraham obeyed, believed, and relied on God. But God never promised spiritual salvation to the nation of Israel in the days of Moses. If they would obey His government, God promised them national wealth, greatness, and power, but not eternal LIFE. (This will be thoroughly explained in a coming lesson.)

Through all these millennia only the prophets and a select few others were given God's Spirit—and they only to carry out an assignment from God (see Jeremiah 7:1-34 for an example). Then came Jesus proclaiming the same knowledge He revealed to Adam and Eve. But the people did not believe Him. Many believed on Him, but did not believe Him! And so as we learned in Lesson 1 about the 7,000-year "week" of time God allotted for human history, God turned over to Satan six 1,000-year "days" in which to demonstrate the falsity and utter futility of his "get" way. As a result this entire world's civilization has become mentally, morally and spiritually sick, and has been making progress in reverse. It has become decadent and is now bringing about its own destruction! The terrible state of this present evil world is the end result of past and present living by Satan's way of "get" instead of God's way of "give," and is traceable back to the decision of our first parents, Adam and Eve! So God has permitted Satan to exercise dominion over the earth for 6,000 years. "Six days," God said in effect to Satan, "shalt thou labor and do all thy work"—in this case Satan's work of deception and hostility toward God—"but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work" (Exodus 20:9-10).

Thank God we are near the end of six working days allotted to Satan's dominion. God's thousand-year "Sabbath day" is about to dawn!

Utopia After Satan's Removal! At the return of Jesus Christ, the archdeceiver who was responsible for the sufferings of this world and for bringing mankind to the brink of annihilation, will be totally restrained from deceiving the world for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3).

War shall then be outlawed and abolished. The coming Kingdom of God will restore the laws and rule of God to the entire earth. And it will bring about a new civilization based on GOD'S way of life that will result in world peace (review Lesson 4).

People will find security and happiness. Fears and worries will disappear. Sickness and disease will be eradicated. Idleness and laziness will disappear as people find purpose in and experience accomplishment from gainful employment. Families will live together not just out of a sense of duty, but in warmth, happiness, and harmony. Broken homes and divorce will be a thing of the past. In this joyous world tomorrow, the whole earth will break forth in singing, dancing, and rejoicing! People will learn what abundant living really is. And it is then that God will set His hand to save the world as the millions are taught the way to eternal LIFE!

Now that we have compared 6,000 years of Satan's rule to Christ's 1,000-year rule over the earth, what about the angels who long ago chose to remain obedient to God? What are they doing today?

Role of Righteous Angels Today The Bible indicates that two-thirds of the angels remained loyal to God. These countless millions of created beings are His servants in helping to carry out His plan for mankind, as well as performing other responsibilities. Let's see what God's Word tells us about them.

1. In the Bible are described various types of angels whose appearance and function differ. Are there cherubim at God's throne? Psalms 99:1.And seraphim? Isaiah 6:1-7.Are there other angelic creatures and "elders" surrounding God's throne? Revelation 4:2-11.

COMMENT: Cherubim are associated with God's throne, either transporting it about, or carrying out important directives from that throne, such as guarding the tree of life after Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:24). Recall that Lucifer, an anointed cherub (Ezekiel 28:14), was given great authority to administer God's government over millions of angels on earth before Adam. The best description of cherubim is found in the book of Ezekiel. In chapters one, nine and ten, we read of cherubim transporting God's throne. They are large, powerful, and described as four-faced creatures with four wings. The seraphim bear a general resemblance to the human figure and have six wings, whereas the four "beasts," or, better translated, "living creatures," are described as having the combined features of cherubim and seraphim. No description of the 24 elders is given in the Bible except for the fact they are dressed in white clothing, each having a golden crown on his head.

2. Does God also have angels who continually walk through the earth to observe and report to Him overall conditions in the world? Revelation 5:6;Zechariah 4:10;2 Chronicles 16:9.Are there other untold millions of angels serving God at His universe-ruling throne in heaven? Daniel 7:9-10.

3. In Hebrews chapters one and two, the apostle Paul speaks about the difference between man and angels. Are we plainly told that "the world to come"—the Millennium and thereafter—will not be ruled by angels? Hebrews 2:5.But if we become the spirit-born sons of God, are we promised rulership over angels? Hebrews 2:6-8;1 Corinthians 6:2-3.

COMMENT: God inspired Paul to point out that man has been made a little lower than the angels for now, but will in the future be placed OVER God's "works"—all His creation, including angels!

4. What, besides composition, accounts for the tremendous difference between angels and man? Hebrews 1:5,Hebrews 1:13.

COMMENT: Man, now lower than angels, has a destiny far higher! Neither animal, nor angel, nor any other being, except man, was created to be literally begotten by the spiritual reproductive process and then actually be BORN into the divine GOD FAMILY!

Angels were not, and never can be, begotten and BORN of God! No angel can ever become a literal part of the DIVINE FAMILY OF GOD!

5. What, specifically, is God’s purpose for His created angels? Hebrews 1:7,Hebrews 1:14. Are spirit-begotten Christians the "heirs" Paul is talking about? Romans 8:16-17;Galatians 3:26-29;Galatians 4:6-7.

COMMENT: Angels, higher than man is now, were created to be God’s servants, messengers, and representatives in the administration of His universe-ruling government. Now, in relation to man, angels are commissioned to minister to and serve the spirit-begotten children of God who are His spiritual "heirs". To illustrate the primary activity of God’s angels today, we might consider the status of the young son of a wealthy man. While still a child, he may be under the care of an adult servant or guardian designated by his father. The servant is older, farther advanced in knowledge, much more developed physically and mentally—but far lower potentially. For when the son is mature, he will inherit his father’s wealth and power. Therefore the servant, older and more mature, is only a servant "ministering" to the young "heir." Likewise, angels are ministering to spirit-begotten humans today.

6. Do God’s children have the protection of angels who are in close contact with the Father in heaven? Matthew 18:10;Acts 12:15.

7. Are angels powerful? 2 Peter 2:11.Do the angels of God keep close to His obedient children to protect them from accidents, calamities, plagues and other evils? Psalms 34:7;Psalms 91:1-12.Will God’s angels also fight our enemies for us? Psalms 35:1,Psalms 35:5-6.

COMMENT: God’s ministering spirits are assigned to help His heirs along the road to eternal life; to save them from premature death and/or accidents and to help fight their battles and protect them from the Devil and his demons.

8. Do God’s holy angels have the power to physically manifest themselves on occasion in the likeness of men in order to carry out their duties? Daniel 9:21;Hebrews 13:2.Also read all of Genesis 18:1-33 and Genesis 19:1-22.

COMMENT: Angels are also messengers. They appeared to Abraham, Lot, Hagar, Moses, Gideon, Elijah and many of the prophets and apostles. When these angels manifest themselves to human beings, they do so in the form of ordinary men. Paul points out in Hebrews 13:2 that they sometimes travel incognito on God’s business, not revealing that they are angels. But righteous angels never capriciously appear and disappear merely to amuse either themselves or men.

9. Why did the prophet Elisha ask God to open the eyes of his servant? 2 Kings 6:15-17.

COMMENT: No wonder Elisha had no fear of his physical enemies. He saw one of God’s spirit armies standing upon the mountain!

10. Did God commission a special angel to watch over the children of Israel and bring them into the promised land? Exodus 23:20-23.

11. Is Michael (one of the archangels who remained loyal to God) the chief guardian of the descendants of ancient Israel? Daniel 12:1.("At that [end-] time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people," is how the Revised Standard Version renders Daniel 12:1.)

COMMENT: The Bible mentions by name three angels of very high rank: Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12), now Satan the Devil; Gabriel, who appeared to Daniel on two occasions (Daniel 8:16;Daniel 9:21), to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19), and later to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-27); and Michael, called one of the chief princes (Daniel 10:13), and whom Jude identifies as an archangel (Jude 1:9). Michael is the archangel specifically assigned to protect and minister to the twelve tribes of Israel.

It is interesting to note that twelve of God’s angels will be the gatekeepers in the new city of Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12), one for each tribe of Israel. These twelve may be assisting the archangel Michael right now.

12. Was Gabriel sent to give the prophet Daniel understanding of visions, and even to fight spiritual battles with powerful fallen angels ("princes") of the Devil in order that God’s will be carried out among the governments of men? Daniel 8:15-16;Daniel 9:21-22;Daniel 10:10-14;Daniel 10:20-21.

COMMENT: From these accounts in Daniel and elsewhere in the Bible, we can gather that the spirit world is teeming with activity! God works (John 5:17)and His righteous angelic servants are busy helping to carry out His will for mankind. Satan and his demons are just as busy trying to thwart, tear down, and destroy the plan of God.

13. What did an angel of God do when the civil rulers put some of the apostles in prison? Acts 5:17-20.Did this enable the apostles to continue preaching the truth of God? Acts 5:21.

COMMENT: We have covered only a few of the many verses showing how God’s angels serve Him and His saints today. Let’s be grateful to God for sending His powerful, holy, and righteous angels to assist and watch over the work of His Church and those of us who are His spirit-begotten children—His heirs soon to be born into the universe-ruling Family of God!

Beware of Your Adversary! As this lesson has clearly shown, God did not create Satan the Devil. God created a cherub of high rank—an archangel named Lucifer—perfect in his ways, but with the power of free choice. Lucifer transformed himself into the Devil by his rebellion against the government of God! By his rebellion Lucifer became Satan. By his own choice in opposing God, he made himself God’s adversary.

Recall that the great Lucifer and all the other created angels were never destined to be more than the servants of God. None of the angels can be begotten of God and born into the very Family of God as mankind can be. After the rebellion of Satan and his angels, God created humans and opened to them the potential to become the born-again SONS OF GOD to rule this earth and

ultimately the entire universe with Jesus Christ.

Satan and his demons know and hate this fact! Consequently, Satan views human beings as a grave threat to his way of life. With his perverted and twisted mind, Satan, who tried to usurp all power and authority from God, now looks upon humans as "competitors" because God has designed man to replace him and his demons as rulers of this world! And so what could be better, Satan reasons, than to cause these "competitors" to disobey God and thereby disqualify themselves so God cannot use them! Therefore Satan's whole self-willed purpose, beginning with Adam and Eve, is to destroy all mankind and thus, he hopes, thwart the plan of God. That is why Christ called the Devil a "murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

Satan attempted to thwart God's plan to reproduce Himself by first succeeding in getting the first Adam to rebel against his Creator, thus disqualifying himself from replacing Satan. He then attempted to have Christ, the second Adam, killed by the civil human government while He was still a young child. Then, when Christ was an adult, Satan attempted to spiritually destroy Him by tempting Him to sin. Had Satan won this titanic spiritual battle, he would have retained world rule. If Christ won, He would depose Satan and become world ruler at His Second Coming. Christ did win that battle by proving He would obey the government of God, resist the Devil, and faithfully rule by God's Law throughout eternity. And so must we if God is to give us co-rulership of the entire universe with Christ!

We, too, must overcome Satan by the Word and Spirit of God as Christ did. God shows us how we can win the battle.

1. Are we plainly told that spirit-begotten Christians are in an all-out battle for their spiritual lives? 1 Peter 5:8;Ephesians 6:12.Can we afford to be ignorant of Satan's battle tactics? 2 Corinthians 2:11.

COMMENT: We are in a spiritual warfare with wicked spirits. We need to know how to protect ourselves from these invisible enemies who are out to destroy us spiritually!

2. What is the chief weapon Satan uses in his attempt to destroy God's saints? Ephesians 2:2-3.

COMMENT: Satan, formerly the great archangel Lucifer who was originally created perfect in his ways (Ezekiel 28:15), developed his satanic nature by his own reasoning and choice. Humans, in turn, acquire Satan's nature which is part of what we call "human nature." Notice how Paul described this natural frame of mind: "The carnal mind [an attitude acquired from Satan] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). But once the Holy Spirit of God is added to a person's mind upon repentance and baptism, he has the spiritual awareness and strength to resist the attitudes of self-centeredness, lust, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, resentment, bitterness and hate, which are "broadcast" to the mind by Satan! No person is compelled to respond to and obey these impulses from Satan. The Devil has no power to force anyone to think or do wrong! But the unsuspecting automatically do so without realizing what is taking place in their minds. Most people just drift along, responding to emotions and impulses which are often expressed in a sinful way (Galatians 5:19-21).

3. After one is begotten by God's Holy Spirit which makes one a real Christian (Romans 8:9), will the Devil continue to try to beguile the newly begotten Christian—to deceive his or her mind and

lead the person away from Christ and His ways? 2 Corinthians 11:2-4.Did some Christians in Paul's day begin to fall victim to the Devil's promptings once again? Galatians 1:6-8;Galatians 3:1.Does Satan also have his own ministers though whom he works? 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

COMMENT: Conversion does not shield you from Satan's "wavelength." He continues to "broadcast" the attitudes of his nature to our minds and works through others to subvert our life in Christ. When Jesus spoke of overcoming, He referred to overcoming the ways of Satan, which are contrary to God's way. Those who have turned from Satan's way are to be on guard against him and must FIGHT TO OVERCOME his subtle urgings and remain true to God's way!

Before Jesus Christ could qualify to restore the government of God and rule all nations, He had to withstand Satan's most severe temptations. Christ overcame the Devil's wiles by the spiritual Word and power of God. He knew God's will. Therefore, the Devil could not deceive Him! He responded to the Devil's temptations by citing the appropriate scripture that applied in each situation. He knew the Word of God thoroughly.

4. Are Christians today also to resist the Devil by remaining firm in the truth God has revealed to them? 1 Peter 5:9.What must the Devil do if we resist him steadfastly? James 4:7.

5. The apostle Paul gives us specific instructions on fighting against the impulses and attitudes of the Devil. What are Christians to put on in order to fight this spiritual battle? Ephesians 6:10-13.Of what does God's spiritual armor consist? Ephesians 6:14-20.

COMMENT: "Truth" refers to the inspired Word of God (John 17:17), the first piece in the Christian's spiritual armor. The "breastplate of righteousness" is obedience to God's commandments (Psalms 119:172); the "gospel" is the message of the coming Kingdom of God when Christ will rule this earth and bring it peace. The "shield of faith" refers to the faith of Jesus Christ which can be within us (Galatians 2:20;Php 3:9), not just to our own human faith. This faith is God's gift imparted by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). And it is this faith—Christ's faith put within us—that will enable us to conquer and overcome Satan and sin! The "helmet of salvation" is the knowledge of what salvation is, what it involves—the purpose of life, the true goal and potential of mankind— becoming divine members of the Family of God! The "sword of the Spirit" refers to the written Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). It is the Christian's offensive weapon in fighting against the wiles of the Devil. To rightly use this weapon in waging a winning battle against the crafty rulers of darkness, we must study the Bible and learn God's will and His promises!

What Paul finally mentions in withstanding the attacks of Satan is "prayer." Christians are to draw close to God in persevering prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17)--praying for God's Church, its work and its ministers, for all of God's people, and themselves. This is the way to overcome Satan and force him to flee! This is the perfect strategy for defeating the Devil's army of demons. If you diligently follow this formula, your success in overcoming these satanic foes will be guaranteed!

Satan's Final Attempt to Wrest Dominion From God

Satan, aided by millions of fallen angelic demons, is the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4)--the invisible world ruler who incites mankind to disobey God.

Although Satan and his demons were cast back to the earth after their attempt to dethrone God, they still seek to wrest dominion from God. These are the inordinately ambitious, unscrupulous

and ruthless angels who, not being members of the God Family, seek by any and every way they can to make of themselves the universe-ruling "gods" over and above the Supreme CREATOR God and His Family—the Kingdom of God!

1. Did Jesus reveal that Satan would make another attempt to wrest dominion from God? Revelation 12:7.Would he be cast back down to earth again? Revelation 12:9. Does Revelation 12:10 show this happens shortly before Christ's coming to establish the Kingdom of God? Will Satan be permanently cast out of God's presence and from ever having part in the government of God again? Revelation 12:8.

2. Will the Devil then bring great wrath upon the whole world? Revelation 12:12.Will he be especially wrathful against the end-time Church of God? Revelation 12:13-17. Why will he be extremely angry at this time? Revelation 12:12, last part. "A short time" before what? Revelation 20:1-3.

COMMENT: Once cast back to the earth for the second and last time, Satan will know that only a very short time remains before he will be completely restrained from further deceiving the world for a thousand years, and from attempting to destroy God's saints both physically and spiritually. Therefore he will pull out all stops in a last-ditch effort to destroy the remnant of God's Church—those who are not "accounted worthy to escape" (Luke 21:36).

3. Revelation 12:1-17 speaks of God's end-time Church, personifying it as a woman. Will God provide His Church with shelter away from the wrath of the Devil? Revelation 12:14-16.(Also read Revelation 3:10.) However, will a "remnant" of God's Church be lukewarm spiritually, and not be accounted worthy to escape? Revelation 12:17; Revelation 3:14-19.Will God rebuke and chasten them, allowing them to suffer the fiery trials of the wrath of Satan to wake them up spiritually? Revelation 3:18-19.

COMMENT: This end-time prophecy tells of an "escape" for His faithful servants from the terrible tribulation caused by Satan the Devil. God's Church will be in a "wilderness" where she will be protected from Satan, his demons and his human agents, and from the devastation of a world at war around them. Will you be there? The way to make sure you will be taken to this "place" of protection has been made clear in the Bible!

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. Both members of the God family are eternally living beings because: A. they don't require oxygen to live. B. have self-contained life within themselves C. are composed of non-spirit substance. D. sustain each other in some incomprehensible way.

2. God created the angels out of spirit so they A. would be equal with God. B. could develop Godly character. C. would not have an eternal existence. D. would have self-contained life like the God family.

3. The earth was originally created to be A. the habitation of angels. B. the dwelling place of man. C. the abode of the God family. D. merely an example of God’s creative power.

4. God’s government, based on His law of love, A. involves the administration of God’s way of life. B. directs those under it into His way of life. C. was established over the angels to regulate their conduct toward their Creator and toward each other. D. All of the above.

5. Whom did God set over the angels to administer His government? A. The Word, before His human birth. B. The archangel Lucifer, who had been stationed at the very throne of God in heaven. C. A cherub without any training in government. D. One of the 24 elders.

6. Lucifer, as God originally created him, was A. always an adversary. B. an ordinary angel. C. a glorious archangel with remarkable attributes. D. predestined to fail.

7. Lucifer was perfect in all his ways until A. he began thinking thoughts of vanity, envy, lust and competition and sinned. B. he fell from heaven. C. God assigned him to another planet. D. other angels convinced him to become the first rebel.

8. After Lucifer rebelled, God A. removed him from his office of rulership over the earth. B. has been in constant fear of being overthrown by sinning angels. C. changed his name to Satan which means adversary. D. realized He erred in making angels free moral agents.

9. How many of the angels abandoned God’s way of love and followed Lucifer in his rebellion? A. One-fourth. B. One-third. C. One-half. D. Two-thirds.

10. God chose to make angels, and later humans, free moral agents so they A. could develop holy, righteous character. B. would be like automatons. C. would rebel. D. would sin and need a savior.

11. The sin of the angels A. was a total surprise to God. B. destroyed the government of God. C. was a fatal blow to God’s plans. D. proved that only members of the God family would not sin.

12. After the sin of the angels, the next step in God’s plan was to A. provide a savior for fallen angels. B. promote the loyal angels to sonship in His family. C. begin reproducing Himself through human beings. D. dispense with the idea of free moral agency.

13. What did the "tree of life" symbolize? A. The Holy Spirit and eternal life. B. The way of God’s government which is the Law of God C. Revealed knowledge that could be received and understood. D. All of the above.

14. Which one of the following did the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil" not represent? A. The way of rebellion against God’s government. B. Eternal life. C. The way of deciding for oneself right from wrong. D. Sin and its penalty—eternal death.

15. Had Adam and Eve partaken of the tree of life, A. they would have received the Holy Spirit and been begotten of God. B. they would have immediately received eternal life. C. their character

would have been perfected instantly. D. they would have been led into Satan’s "get" way of life.

16. When Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, A. he gained access to revealed spiritual knowledge. B. he limited himself to the knowledge of spiritual things. C. God shut the Holy Spirit off from mankind. D. All of the above.

17. The "second Adam," Jesus Christ, A. restored the government of God on earth before ascending to heaven. B. made the Holy Spirit available again after His resurrection, but only to those God would call. C. failed to replace Satan as world ruler. D. was inducted into office as the new world ruler after defeating Satan.

18. Which of the following is not true? A. Man was made a little higher than the angels for now. B. The World Tomorrow will not be ruled by angels. C. Spirit-born sons of God are to rule over angels. D. Angels can never become members of the divine family of God.

19. Angels are not intended to A. be God’s messengers. B. serve potential sons of God’s divine family. C. protect God’s Spirit-begotten children. D. amuse either themselves or men by supernatural feats or tricks.

20. Satan looks upon all mankind as "competitors" because A. humans are competing with him for rulership of the world. B. God has destined man to replace Satan and his demons as rulers of this world. C. Satan and man both have the potential of becoming Sons of God and ruling all things under Christ. D. he feels inferior to man.

21. The evil characteristics of human nature are A. expressions of the mind of Satan the devil. B. expressions of God’s love. C. the results of demon possession. D. inherited from our parents.

22. How does Satan transmit his nature to our minds? A. By using radio signals. B. He doesn’t—we are actually born with his nature. C. He spiritually injects or "broadcasts" his attitudes. D. He can’t do this to Christians because conversion shields them from his attitudes.

23. How can a Christian overcome Satan and his demons? A. By simply mentioning the name of Christ. B. By putting on the whole spiritual armor of God. C. By resolving not to sin. D. By just praying regularly.

24. Which of the following statements is not true? A. Satan will again attempt to dethrone God B. Once cast back to the earth, Satan will know he has but a short time before being restrained for 1,000 years. C. Satan, once cast down again, will attempt to physically and spiritually destroy Spirit-begotten Christians. D. Satan will always have access to God’s throne.

25. During the coming time of Satan’s wrath upon the whole world, God’s obedient servants will: A. be miraculously protected in a special place prepared by God. B. flee to local forests and mountains where they will hide. C. be whisked away to heaven in a "rapture." D. have to suffer along with the rest of the world.

Lesson 15

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 15 Why is Man Different from Any other living Creature?

Man is God’s unique physical creation. But HOW is man different? WHAT makes him utterly unlike any other living creature? More important, WHY is he unique? THE most complex, truly unique mechanism ever designed and made is man with his marvelous mind and body. With such a complex creation it was only natural that our Maker send along His "Instruction Book"—just as a manufacturer sends along with the instrument or device he manufactures an instruction book describing what his product is designed to do.

Source of Missing Knowledge That Instruction Book sent from God you have been studying with the help of these lessons. It is the Holy Bible. It reveals the missing dimension in knowledge—the incredible human potential. That all-important knowledge is revealed and made plain for those who will read it, study it, and believe what it says.

God’s Instruction Book tells us what we are, why we are, where we are going, and the way to get there!

It reveals, as we have seen in previous lessons, that "God" is a divine family composed of two supreme Spirit Beings (John 1:1). God, the head of that family, has existed eternally. With Him there coexists, also from eternity, "the Word," a second Personage who also is God. God created all things by and through this coexisting Spirit Being (John 1:2-3). The Word first created angels—composed of spirit, though lesser than God and lacking in ultimate creative power. Next, the physical universe, including the earth, was brought into existence. A third of the angels were then placed here on earth. They were put under the rule of the government of God which was administered on earth by the great archangel Lucifer.

Under the government of God—which is in reality the administration of God’s way of outgoing love as spelled out in the Ten Commandments =the earth was initially filled with peace, happiness, joy and wonderful accomplishment. But ultimately, Lucifer led his angels into rebellion. The government of God was rejected—no longer enforced. As a result, the earth became waste and empty, in confusion and utter darkness.

Later, in six days God renewed the face of the earth (Psalms 104:30). During this creation week of Genesis chapter one, God made physical life forms—the flora and then the fauna—that reproduce themselves. These life forms were created without the thinking, reasoning, decision-making processes, and without ethical or moral capabilities—unlike man, God’s masterpiece of creative workmanship. That which makes these God-plane attributes possible in man is the fascinating subject of this lesson! But before you begin this study, be sure to get your Bible so you can turn to each scripture given in answer to the questions. Always read these verses to benefit fully from your study.

Lesson 15 Man Is a MORTAL "Soul" In the FOUNDATION of knowledge, God’s Instruction Book for man, the Creator God reveals much knowledge totally beyond man’s ability to discover for himself—including the knowledge and understanding of what man is, why he was made that way, as well as what he is to become.

God created the first man. And He tells us how He made him so there would be no doubt as to what we really are.

1. Out of what did God form man? Genesis 2:7.Was it the whole man- "thou"—that was composed of dust? Genesis 3:19.

COMMENT: Adam was made from and therefore composed of earth—the dust of the ground!

2. After God had formed the man—made all the cells in his body—what did He do to give him physical life? Genesis 2:7.

COMMENT: God blew into the man’s lungs through the nostrils air—"the breath of life"—containing oxygen and the man began to live! Notice that the verse does not say God breathed an immortal soul into the man.

3. Does the "breath of life" also pass through the nostrils of animals? Genesis 7:21-22.Is it therefore the breath of life that is cut off when a human being or an animal dies? Genesis 7:23.

COMMENT: The source of physical life in man and all animals is the same. Not once does the "breath of life" even remotely refer to an "immortal soul" or life apart from the physical body. Otherwise animals, birds and even insects—gnats, fleas, mosquitoes—have immortal souls, for they all have the same "breath of life"!

4. After God breathed the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils, what did he become? Genesis 2:7,last part.

COMMENT: Man does not have a soul—man Is a "soul"! The original Hebrew word for "soul" is nephesh. Bagster’s Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon defines it as "anything that breathes, an animal." It can also refer to a "person," or even "one dead, a dead body." In Genesis 1:21,Genesis 1:24;Genesis 2:19;Genesis 9:10,Genesis 9:12, Genesis 9:15-16 and Leviticus 11:46,nephesh is translated "creature" when referring to animals. And nephesh is translated as "dead body" or "the dead" in Leviticus 19:28;Leviticus 21:1;Leviticus 22:4;Numbers 5:2;Numbers 6:11;Leviticus 9:6-7, Leviticus 9:10. So man is a creature. Man is a SOUL. Animals are creatures or souls, too! The "soul" is merely physical life that is subject to death and decay. The soul of man clearly is material, not spiritual. It is not immortal!

5. Is man plainly said to be "mortal"? Job 4:17.And are we emphatically told that "souls" can die? Ezekiel 18:4,Ezekiel 18:20.

COMMENT: Since man is a soul, and the soul is mortal, then man is mortal, subject to death. That is why the Scriptures call human beings "mortal man."

6. Was Adam subject to the penalty of death if he sinned? Genesis 2:17,last part. What would he become after death? Genesis 3:19.Was it the body only that would die, or was it the whole man—"thou"—that would die? Same verse.

7. What one thing befalls both man and beast? Ecclesiastes 3:19.Is this because air ceased to enter their lungs? Same verse.

8. Do all men and animals alike go to the same place at death? Ecclesiastes 3:20.

COMMENT: When an animal dies, it is dead. When man dies, he is completely dead, too. Both go to the grave. And all men and animals become dust once again.

9. Now what does Ecclesiastes 3:21 ask? COMMENT: The Hebrew word ruach, translated "spirit" in this verse, also means air, wind, breath. It is translated 27 times as "breath" in the King James Version. Three examples are Genesis 6:17;Genesis 7:15 and Lamentations 4:20.It is also translated 83 times as "wind." Thus we can see that ruach has a very broad meaning, and may be applied to a wide variety of things whose common denominator is invisibility. It may mean "attitude" as well as "spirit," and with the word "holy," it means the Holy Spirit of God.

Solomon asks, therefore, since the same event—death—occurs to both man and beast, "Who knows whether a man’s ruach goes up or whether a beast’s goes downward?" Although the same death befalls both, the Bible reveals there is a vast difference between man and beast, as we will shortly see—and that difference does not have to do with any "immortal soul."

10. When a person dies—becomes lifeless—does he still have a conscious existence apart from the body because of an "immortal soul" that existed within him? Ecclesiastes 9:5;Psalms 146:4.

11. Are the dead able to praise God? Psalms 115:17.Is there any remembrance of God in death? Psalms 6:5.

12. Is the "soul" something which can be destroyed? Matthew 10:28.Then didn’t Jesus plainly show that the soul of man is not immortal? Let’s understand exactly what Jesus was talking about.

COMMENT: There are those who use this text to support the common belief of the immortality of the soul. Yet this verse plainly says the soul is something that can be destroyed in hell! Thus, whatever this "soul" is, it could NOT be immortal! The New Testament Greek word here, translated "soul" is psuche. The Greek psuche simply means "life," "existence," just as does the Old Testament Hebrew word nephesh. In Matthew 10:28,the word soul refers to life that man cannot permanently destroy—but which God can. What kind of life could this be? Obviously life which God RESTORES by a resurrection!

Man cannot permanently destroy a life that God renews by a resurrection. Although men may kill their physical bodies, said Jesus, true Christians know that men cannot take from them eternal life, which God has promised at the resurrection. But GOD can permanently destroy all possibility of eternal life. How? By casting a physically resurrected person into the "lake of fire" to be utterly consumed—never to be resurrected again. This is the ultimate penalty of sin (Romans 6:23)--eternal death! The book of Luke makes the meaning plainer: "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which AFTER he hath killed hath power to cast into hell..." (Luke 12:5). God not only has the power to take our present physical life, but also has the power to resurrect us and—if we have proven to be disobedient and incorrigible—to cast us into the lake of fire from which there will be NO future resurrection! (Revelation 20:14-15;Revelation 21:8.) This possibility of eternal destruction is a key reason why God made humankind mortal!

Why Created Mortal

Recall from our previous studies that the government of God ceased to be administered on earth after the rebellion of the archangel, Lucifer (now called Satan), and one-third of the angels. Later, God created the first human, Adam, with the potential of qualifying to replace Satan as ruler of the earth, thus restoring the government and way of God. But to qualify as successor to Satan, the human successor had to reject Satan's way and come under the government of God.

God's master plan for accomplishing His purpose in the human race took form and shape even before man was made. If mortal man sinned by rejecting God's government—as all but Jesus have—God would make it possible for him to REPENT—to turn from sinning, to be reconciled to God and to live God's way of life, finally to be born of God as members of His eternal family!

1. Did the Word volunteer, in advance, to divest Himself temporarily of the supreme power and glory He had possessed from eternity, to be begotten by God, and be born of human flesh for the purpose of death to pay the penalty for the sins of mortal man? John 1:1,John 1:14;John 17:5;Hebrews 2:9;Php 2:5-8;Romans 5:6-9;1 Peter 1:19-21;Revelation 13:8.

COMMENT: Since God delegated the actual creation of man to the Word (John 1:3), the Word, when physically born as a human being for the purpose of death, would, in that death, be giving a life of greater value than the sum total of all human lives. And, being Divine as well as human—being God as well as man, He, the person of Christ, avoided sinning through the fullness of the Holy Spirit which He possessed. Then He, who never sinned, although tempted in all points just like the rest of humanity (Hebrews 4:15), in death could pay in our stead the penalty we have incurred, which is eternal death (Romans 6:23).

Since God the Father has the power of life and death, He resurrected Christ from death to immortal life—thus making a resurrection to immortal, Spirit-composed life also possible for mankind (Romans 5:10).

2. Does God therefore command all men to repent? Mark 1:14-15;Acts 17:30;Acts 2:38.What are we in reality choosing when we repent? Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

COMMENT: Repentance is turning from the way of Satan to the government of God. It is accepting God's rule over our lives through His Law of love. It is accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and soon-coming King—the "second Adam" who did qualify (whereas the first Adam failed) to reestablish the government of God on the earth by overcoming Satan. Those who are to reign with Christ must also qualify during this mortal life by turning from and rejecting Satan's way, overcoming that way day by day, and acually living by God's Law of love.

3. Will those who choose life—who repent of sin and obey God—be born of immortal spirit at the first resurrection? 1 Corinthians 15:42-54;John 3:3-8.

4. But what about those who will not repent and accept Christ's sacrifice in payment for their sins—those who refuse to turn from Satan's way and refuse to come under the government of God in their lives—what will ultimately happen to them? Romans 6:23;Revelation 20:14-15;Malachi 4:1-3.

COMMENT: God wants every human being who has ever lived to have the opportunity to repent and live forever (2 Peter 3:9;1 Timothy 2:3-4). But God will not force anyone to choose life. For those who refuse to follow God's way to eternal life there will be the "second death"—the fate of all UNrepentant sinners. They will cease to exist forever. They will be as if they had never been!

We can now see that God chose to make man first out of physical matter instead of spirit for an important reason. Prior to the creation of man, He had made angels out of immortal spirit—not mortal flesh and blood subject to death. And one-third of these angels sinned by rebelling against the government of God. But the punishment for sinning angels is not physical death.

Angels are composed of spirit and therefore cannot die. Since one-third of the angels chose the way of sin, their punishment is eternal loss of the glorious opportunity God gave them to accomplish His purpose on earth. And their sins have resulted in eternal hopelessness and frustration, their minds being filled with resentment, bitterness and rebellion. Happiness and joy have left them forever!

God planned in advance that if man, composed of matter, sinned and refused to repent, he would die—he would be as though he had not been. God will not allow any incorrigible human being to live forever in mental anguish and torment like the fallen angels. This plan reflects the great mercy of God toward mortal man! When called by God and made to realize that he has sinned, man can REPENT—turn from his sin to God's way. And once his course is changed, with God's help he can pursue a life of obedience to God. He can grow in spiritual knowledge and develop the character of God—overcome wrong habits, weaknesses and faults. (More about this later.) And this is all done through the free will and choice of each human mind. And that brings us to the crux of this lesson!

Only man, of all God's physical creatures, has the seemingly miraculous ability to think, reason, plan and design, come to conclusions based on acquired knowledge. Animals cannot comprehend the concepts of good and evil. They don't repent. Have you ever wondered why? Have you ever thought about the vast difference between animal brain and human mind, and what could possibly account for it?

Animal Brain vs. Human Mind

There is a great, uncrossable GULF between animal brain and human mind. The evolutionary theory assumes that humans are animals. But one thing evolution can never explain is the total difference between animal brain equipped with instinct, and the human mind with creative reasoning powers of intellect and devoid of instinct in the strict sense that animals possess it.

Some animals have physical brains as large or larger than man's brain, and with similar cerebral cortex complexity—but none has the powers of intellect, logic, self-consciousness and creativity. The physical brain of a dolphin, whale or elephant is larger than the human brain, while a chimp's is slightly smaller. Qualitatively the difference between them and the human brain is very little—not enough to remotely account for the vastly superior intelligence and output of the human brain. The gap between animal brain and human mind is incredibly vast!

1. Were animals created in God's image—or was each created after its own kind? Genesis 1:21,Genesis 1:24-25. Who was created in the "image" and "likeness" of God? Genesis

1:26-27.Was man to rule over all other creatures? Genesis 1:26.

COMMENT: These verses reveal God’s great plan—His ultimate purpose for mankind. When God molded Adam out of the dust of the ground, he was made in the "likeness"—the outward form and shape—of GOD Himself! God didn’t make any of the other creatures to be a clay replica of Himself. This unique form and shape was given to man alone. This is because man was created with the potential to become God!

Each animal was created with a brain suited for its particular animal kind. But animals do not have the potential of MIND and CHARACTER which God gave only to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power—the ability to think, to reason, to make choices and decisions—as was man!

It is this very SPECIAL ATTRIBUTE OF MIND AND CHARACTER that separates men from animals!

Animals possess what we call instinct. Their brains are "programmed," so to speak, by God with particular instinctive aptitudes to live and perform in a certain way. They follow instinctive habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration and reproduction. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests, etc. These aptitudes are inherited—they are not the result of logical, cognitive or thinking processes. For example, millions of birds flock south each year as winter approaches in the northern hemisphere. They don’t stop to "reason" why, they don’t ask themselves whether they should, they don’t "plan ahead" an itinerary for the trip. At a given internal signal—like the preset alarm of a clock—they leave their summer feeding grounds in the north and travel hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles south. Scientists don’t fully understand how or why—they merely observe the operation of this animal instinct.

Each species or kind of bird builds a different type of nest, and feeds on specific kinds of foods. Many migrate at different times to various destinations. But none of these actions is planned in advance by the birds. They merely have the capability and proclivity to do that which Almighty God built into the instinct of each at creation. But man’s mind is vastly different from animal instinct. Man is able to devise various ways to do any one thing or to achieve a predetermined goal. Man can acquire knowledge and reason from it. He can draw conclusions, make decisions, will to act according to a thought-out plan.

Man can design and build different types of houses, using different designs and different building materials. Men also eat different foods, prepared in many different ways. Men may live entirely different lifestyles from one another. And if a man wants to change his way of life—he can! Man is not subject to instinct. He is not governed by a set of predetermined habit patterns as animals are.

Man can choose—he has free moral agency. He can devise codes of conduct and exercise self-discipline. Man can originate ideas and evaluate knowledge because he has a MIND which is patterned after God’s own mind! Man can devise, plan, and bring his plans to fruition because he has been given some of the very creative powers of God!

Man alone can wonder, " Why was I born? What is life? What is death? Is there a purpose in human existence?" Man, unlike the animals, not only knows how to do certain things, but he also KNOWS that he knows—that is, he is aware that he has "knowledge." He is conscious of the fact.

He is self-conscious, aware of his own existence as a unique being.

These attributes of mind and character make man God’s UNIQUE physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with man. And God expects man to develop and become conformed to the spiritual "image" of God’s perfect mind and holy character (Matthew 5:48)--just as man now is formed in the physical "image" of God.

"Human" Spirit Makes the Difference!

Man was created to have a very special relationship with God that is utterly nonexistent with animals. Man was made in the similitude of the GOD kind. He was made in God’s image so that he might one day be born into God’s divine family!

God’s purpose in making mortal man after His own likeness demanded mind power in man patterned after God’s own mind. That is why the most remarkable thing about man is his mind.

What is it then that separates humankind from the animal kingdom? What gives him this God plane power of intellect?

It all boils down to a nonphysical component in the human brain that does not exist in animal brain. It is this nonphysical component that makes man so vastly different from animals. It is what makes man truly unique!

1. Since man does not have an immortal soul within him which enables him to live on apart from his body after death (remember man is a mortal soul), does the Bible nevertheless speak of a "spirit IN man"? Job 32:8,Job 32:18; Zechariah 12:1;1 Corinthians 2:11.

COMMENT: Many passages of Scripture show that there is a "spirit" IN man! This spirit is not the man—it is something that is in the man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms human MIND. It imparts to man’s brain his unique powers of intellect and personality—the ability to think rationally and make freewill decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or other types of knowledge such as music, art, carpentry, flying, etc. But that’s all. The spirit that is in man has no consciousness of itself. It is not an "immortal soul."

2. Is this "spirit in man" clearly distinguished from the Holy Spirit of God? 1 Corinthians 2:11.

COMMENT: The spirit which is in man can be called "human" spirit, for it is in each human, even though it is spirit essence and not matter. It is not a "ghost," spirit being, or the Holy Spirit. 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, given to every human being by God, does not supply human life—the human life is in the physical blood, oxidized by the breath of life (Leviticus 17:11). But the spirit in man does impart the power of intellect to the human brain. This nonphysical component in the human brain does not exist in the brains of animals. The spirit in man is spirit essence, just as in the material world air is a gaseous essence. But this "human" spirit cannot see. The physical brain sees through the eyes. The human spirit in a person cannot hear. The brain hears through the ears. This human spirit cannot think. The brain thinks. The human spirit imparts the power to think far above the level of brute animals’ brain function. Without such spirit animals cannot do original thinking.

Whatever knowledge enters the brain through the five senses is instantly stored (memorized) in the "human" spirit within the person, much like a computer stores information. It enables the brain to have instant recall of sored-up knowledge in the spirit, thus enabling the brain to utilize bits of related knowledge in the process of THINKING and REASONING. The "human" spirit imparts the power of intellect to the physical brain in two ways:

1) it gives the brain instant recall of whatever the brain calls for in the knowledge stored in this memory;

2) it supplies the brain whatever energy is needed to cause it to think—that is, to put the pieces of information stored in the spirit together in the process we call "thinking," "reasoning" and "drawing conclusions." The human spirit also is the very means God has instilled to make possible a personal relationship between human MAN and divine GOD. (More about this shortly.)

Animals also see, hear, smell, taste and feel, but what they perceive through their senses is not stored as in the human spirit. There is no spirit to cause the physical brain to function in the process of thinking, reasoning and acquiring knowledge.

3. Why has the truth about this "human" spirit in man not been understood by the world today? Revelation 12:9.

COMMENT: The marvelous truth about the "spirit in man" is so important that Satan twisted and perverted it long ago. He clouded the minds of men and led them into believing his "big lie" as far back as the time of Adam and Eve.

4. What did Satan tell Eve? Genesis 3:4.COMMENT: Here was the origin of the "immortality of the soul" teaching so prevalent today! Satan told Eve she would "not surely die"—in other words, she had an "immortal soul" that would live forever. Eve believed this lie. And most of the world today continues to believe some variation of that ancient "big lie"! A Second Spirit Needed

Man has the intellectual capacity to design spaceships to take him to the moon and back, to invent the computer and to do other marvelous exploits in the physical, material realm. Yet during man’s nearly 6,000 years on earth, he has proved that he cannot solve his problems with fellowmen.

Why has this been so? Because man’s real problems are spiritual in nature and the natural man simply cannot solve spiritual problems. In producing the computer or in flying to the moon, he is dealing with physical matter which he can understand because of the human spirit within him. But he cannot solve problems with fellow humans because this involves knowledge and understanding of spiritual principles which he cannot comprehend without the addition of another spiritual element to his mind!

1. What was the apostle Paul inspired to write about man’s understanding of the spiritual things of God? 1 Corinthians 2:9-11.What must be added before a man can comprehend spiritually revealed knowledge? 1 Corinthians 2:11, last part; 1 Corinthians 2:14.

COMMENT: Man was made to need another spirit—the Holy Spirit of God! Just as a human could not know the things of human knowledge except by the human spirit within him, so he cannot know the things of God—spiritual knowledge—except by the addition of the Spirit of God. Just as surely as no animal brain—such as that of a cow, for example- can comprehend or understand

human affairs without the human spirit, so no human mind can have comprehension of spiritual truths on the divine plane without the Holy Spirit!

Even the greatest scientific and philosophical minds simply cannot come to know and understand SPIRITUAL truths with their natural minds. God’s truth is "foolishness" to them. The natural man with his human spirit is limited to material knowledge.

Spiritual things cannot be seen with the eye, heard with the ear, felt with the hands. The human mind, which can receive knowledge only through the physical senses, can never really comprehend spiritual concepts and principles without the Holy Spirit of God. A man can come to know that which is spiritual only through God’s Holy Spirit, which works with the human spirit in his mind. That is the only way the human mind can receive and comprehend the knowledge of and attain God’s GREAT PURPOSE for man’s existence!

2. Does God reveal there is duality in the creation of man? 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.Must man be born again to enter the kingdom or family of God? John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Mortal man was created incomplete. The complete creation of man is to be accomplished in two stages: 1) the physical phase, which was completed with the first man, Adam; and 2) the spiritual phase, which began with the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. And to accomplish the spiritual phase, man was made to need another Spirit—the Holy Spirit of God.

3. How does one receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38;John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: Through Christ, the Second Adam, we can receive God’s gift of His Holy Spirit. Upon repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose death paid the penalty for sin in our stead, we may be reconciled to God and receive the Holy Spirit of God, which is added to our human spirit.

4. Do we then become the begotten children of God? 1 Peter 1:3;Romans 8:14-17.(Recall we studied this marvelous truth in Lesson 8.)

COMMENT: The human spirit in man and the Holy Spirit of God join to make a begotten child of God, just as the male sperm cell and the female ovum or egg cell join to make a begotten human, but not yet developed or ready to be born as a human being.

God’s Holy Spirit, when it combines with the human spirit in the human mind, does two things:

1) it begets the human with divine, eternal life to be later born into the God family as a divine being, then composed wholly of spirit;

2) it imparts to the mind the ability to comprehend spiritual knowledge—to understand the things of God.

5. Could Adam and Eve have been begotten by God’s Holy Spirit? Genesis 2:9,Genesis 2:16-17.

COMMENT: As thoroughly explained in the previous lesson, the first human beings were freely offered this second and much-needed Spirit. Of the two symbolic trees in the garden in Eden, the "tree of life" represented God’s Holy Spirit. To have taken the fruit of that tree would have been to receive God’s Holy Spirit, which would have joined with their human spirits, impregnating them as begotten (not yet born) children of God. But by taking of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of

good and evil," our first parents rejected God’s Spirit which would have begotten the very life of God in them and would have enabled them to understand revealed spiritual knowledge. Thus they cut themselves and their descendants off from access to God’s Spirit and limited themselves and the human race to material knowledge and understanding, except for those whom God would specially call (John 6:44).

6. When will spirit-begotten Christians be born into God’s spirit family? 1 Corinthians 15:50-53;1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

COMMENT: The Spirit-begotten Christian now has, conditionally, the presence of eternal life within him (or her) through a portion of the Spirit from the Father. But this does not mean he is an immortal spirit being. He is not yet wholly composed of God’s Spirit. He is now an "heir" of God (Romans 8:16-17)--not yet an inheritor or a possessor, not yet "born again." But, if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, God will, at Christ’s return to earth as King of kings, give us immortality by His Spirit that dwells in us (Romans 8:11).

Now just as in human reproduction the impregnated embryo, which later becomes a fetus, is not yet born but must be nourished for a period of time through the human mother; so the begotten Christian is not yet born into the God family. The divine life has merely been begotten. It must now grow!

Why We Must Grow Spiritually

Included in God’s purpose for creating man is the development of righteous, spiritual character within him! Notice again what God said in Genesis 1:26:"Let us make man in our image...." The original Hebrew here indicates far more than merely the form and shape of God—His outward likeness. "Image" also refers to mind and character! God intended for man--to whom He gave the gift of a thinking, reasoning mind—to ultimately have the very mind and character of GOD.

God’s purpose in creating man is to reproduce Himself with perfect spiritual character as only God possesses. Man was therefore created in God’s own image and likeness—His own form and shape with a mind similar to His—so God could begin to develop the very character of God in him.

1. Are spirit-begotten Christians therefore admonished to grow spiritually? 2 Peter 3:18;1 Peter 2:1-2.Who are we eventually to become like? Matthew 5:48;Ephesians 4:15;1 John 3:2,1 John 3:9.

COMMENT: Just as the human body and brain gradually begin to form during the gestation period in human reproduction, the righteous and holy character of God must begin to form and grow once one is begotten by God’s Spirit.

Obviously, we cannot become absolutely perfect in character until the resurrection when God will complete the process by giving each of us a new, perfect spirit body with its perfect—sinless (1 John 3:2,1 John 3:9)--nature that will be like Christ’s and the Father’s. But in the meantime, God wants us to grow in His spiritual character daily by obeying His commandments and overcoming and rooting sin out of our lives—growing toward that spiritual perfection!

Such perfect, holy character cannot be created by fiat. It must be developed and that requires time and experience. God gives us time in which to learn that only His way of life brings real peace, happiness, and a joyful, abundant life. We will have learned that sin causes only heartache,

misery, suffering and death.

2. What is one important way we are to grow once spiritually begotten of God? Matthew 4:4;2 Timothy 3:16-17.

COMMENT: We become spiritual "embryos" when, upon receipt of the Holy Spirit, we are begotten of God. And to grow spiritually, we must take in spiritual nourishment. Just as the embryo in a mother's womb must be nourished with life-giving food through the placenta, so we must be nourished by the Word of God. "... The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Those words are recorded in the Bible—and Jesus said we are to live by every word of God. We drink in these life-giving words from the Bible through reading, studying and meditating (thinking) on what we read.

Spiritual character development requires time and comes largely by experience—by putting the Word of God into practice in our daily lives. One builds the righteous character of God as he comes to discern, through God's revelation in the Holy Bible, right from wrong — the true values from the false — truth from error. The he must chooses the right and rejects the wrong and, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, resists the wrong and DOES the right! Growing in spiritual knowledge and spiritual character is a gradual process that continues the rest of one's life.

3. Is prayer also essential to our spiritual growth and overcoming? Matthew 6:5-15;Ephesians 6:18.

COMMENT: In addition to Bible study, earnest prayer is absolutely necessary. We also absorb spiritual nourishment through personal, daily contact with God. When you study the Bible, God is talking to you. When you pray, you are talking to Him. You really get to know God in this manner, just as you become better acquainted with people by conversation.

4. Is the love we share in Christian fellowship with other spiritually-begotten people in God's Church another important way we grow in God's character? 1 John 1:3,1 John 1:7; Hebrews 10:25.

5. Exactly what part does God's Church play in the individual Christian's spiritual growth? Galatians 4:26;Acts 20:28;Ephesians 4:11-15.

COMMENT: God's Church is the spiritual "mother" of all who have been begotten by God's Holy Spirit. God has set His called and chosen ministers in His Church to "feed the flock" so the individual members may grow spiritually. Christ has given His ministers the responsibility to instruct, teach and counsel the members of the Church. So just as a human mother feeds her begotten child within her womb through the placenta and umbilical cord, God's children are nourished with spiritual food within the true Church. And as the human mother carries her unborn baby in that part of her body where she can best protect it from physical harm. The function of God's Church is to also protect the begotten children of God from spiritual harm—from the false doctrines of false ministers who appear as Christ's representatives, but actually (whether wittingly or unwittingly) represent Satan and his way (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

6. When will we, if we are spirit-begotten Christians, become fully mature, fully grown members of God's divine family? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17;Php 3:20-21;1 John 3:2.

COMMENT: Finally, when resurrected from the dead or changed from mortal flesh to immortal spirit at Christ's return, the incredible human potential will have blossomed into reality. We will have been BORN into the divine family of God possessing the fullness of the very character of God! But since the mortal bodies of those to be resurrected will have already returned to the dust of the earth, how will God restore their former appearance and accumulated funds of knowledge? And what about the righteous character God built within them while alive? The answer to these intriguing questions has to do with the "spirit in man"!

Spirit "Recording" Makes Resurrection Possible

There is an old saying, "You can't take it with you when you die." You may drive yourself relentlessly to amass a financial fortune in this life, but you'll leave it all behind when you die.

There is, however, something infinitely more valuable in life that isn't lost when one dies. And that is the righteous, spiritual character that God, the Master Potter (Isaiah 64:8), is fashioning in those of us who are His spirit-begotten children. In the resurrection, you not only will look just like you do now (without handicaps or blemishes, of course), you will have the same knowledge you acquired in this life—and the same character!

Such men of God as Abraham, Moses, David and Daniel died thousands of years ago. But they will be brought back to life at Christ's return. Since they were composed of corruptible flesh and blood, their bodies have long since decomposed and returned to dust. So how can they exist again as individual personalities? God had to provide some way to preserve their form, shape, appearance, mind and character.

God can bring a dead individual back to life even though a human body that once lived disintegrates, decomposes, or is cremated and scattered to the four winds. It is the "spirit in man" that preserves our very form, shape, memory and character. The resurrected immortal body in the first resurrection will be precisely like the former, though now composed of spirit.

Recall that God puts in every person a separate "human" spirit. As was emphasized before, this spirit does not impart life, cannot see, hear, feel or think. But it does impart mind power to the brain. And this spirit records every bit of knowledge received through the five senses and it records whatever character has been developed during one's life. The "spirit in man" also records the personality of the individual and the physical makeup of the whole body!

1. But what happens to the spirit in man at death? Ecclesiastes 12:7.

COMMENT: When we die, all consciousness ceases (Ecclesiastes 9:5,Psalms 146:4). The physical brain decays. But the "human" spirit, which is not conscious because it has separated from the human brain which makes consciousness possible, returns to God. It is preserved intact by God until the resurrection! It is the one ingredient that was IN humans which makes it possible for individuals to exist again. Therefore the Bible speaks of the dead as being "asleep" in the meantime (Daniel 12:2). And so when a person dies, the spirit "recording" returns to God and is "filed" away until the time God will "replay" it to bring about the resurrection of the identical personality to life and consciousness! To help illustrate how the spirit in man preserves an individual's physical makeup, knowledge, character, personality—actually the whole person—intact until the resurrection, consider how magnetic recording tape is now used to

preserve both sound and picture. In sound recording, a voice or the music of an orchestra is electromagnetically recorded. Your naked eye can’t see anything that was recorded on the tape, yet it’s there. This sound is then reproduced or "resurrected" when played on a tape machine. Until then, however, it makes no sound whatsoever. But when played on the tape machine, the whole sound "comes to life" precisely as it sounded when originally recorded. In the case of a television tape recording, both video (picture) and audio (sound) are recorded. It comes "back to life" in the form of a vivid full-color picture with sound when replayed!

All of this seems commonplace today. We have come to take these "modern miracles" for granted as part of everyday life. Then should it seem too difficult for the Creator, miracle-working God to preserve the unique individual that we are by means of the "spirit in man"?

2. What type of body will the dead in Christ receive at the resurrection? Php 3:20-21;1 Corinthians 15:42-44,1 Corinthians 15:52.

COMMENT: The resurrected being, now born of God, will be composed of spirit, not of matter as the human model was. He will suddenly come alive with his new body. It will seem like the next second from his loss of consciousness at the time of death. He will discover all his memory intact. He will look as he did when he was a physical human being. The character which he built within him will be there. And he will remain alive forever!

Now we see clearly the great purpose the Creator God had in making man UNIQUE among all His physical creation. Mortal man has within his reach the glorious reality of attaining the resurrection of the dead and receiving immortality—forever being a part of the universe-ruling family of God!

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. God’s instruction Book, the Holy Bible, A. merely tells us how we function. B. only tells us who God is. C. is the foundation upon which man builds his own knowledge. D. reveals what man is.

2. God reveals that the "breath of life" (Genesis 2:7)A. refers to an "immortal soul" He puts in each human. B. is simply air—oxygen—the spark that ignites and sustains our physical life. C. is unique to man—animals don’t have it. D. is in animals only.

3. Nephesh, the Hebrew word translated "soul" in the Old Testament, A. refers to physical, material life. B. refers to a conscious existence which continues after a person is physically dead. C. never refers to animal life. D. is never translated "dead body."

4. The "soul" of man A. is actually spiritual in nature. B. is subject to death and decay. C. is not the man. D. cannot be destroyed.

5. The Greek word psuche A. is not translated "soul" in the New Testament. B. has a different meaning than the Hebrew nephesh. C. is equivalent to the Hebrew nephesh in the Old Testament. D. refers to an "immortal soul" in man.

6. What cannot be destroyed by men? A. The body. B. The soul of man. C. The life of man. D. The life God restores by a resurrection.

7. Which of the following is not true? A. God wants every human being to have a chance to repent and live forever. B. God will force us to repent. C. Some people will refuse to repent. D. Those who die the second death will cease to exist forever.

8. Why did God create man mortal? A. So that if we sinned and refused to repent, we would die and simply cease to exist. B. So we could not repent of sin. C. Because He is unmerciful. D. So that incorrigible sinners would experience the same penalty as the angels who sinned.

9. The punishment of the angels who sinned A. is death. B. is loss of sonship in God’s family. C. is eternal loss of their former opportunity to serve in God’s government. D. would not include the eternal anguish of frustration and hopelessness.

10. Animals A. have creative minds like God’s B. comprehend the concepts of good and evil. C. can repent. D. were not created in God’s image.

11. Which one of the following is not true? A. The gap between animal brain and human mind is not as great as once believed. B. Some animals have physical brains as large or larger than man’s. C. Some animals’ brains are nearly as complex as man’s. D. Animals function primarily as a result of instinct.

12. Animals, "programmed" by God with instinct, A. think, reason and make choices as a man can. B. can plan and devise different methods of doing things C. follow predetermined habit patterns in feeding, nesting and reproduction. D. have the potential to build God’s character.

13. Man was created A. without a thinking, reasoning, creative mind. B. with a mind patterned after God’s own mind. C. on the same mental plane as animals. D. with the instinct of animal brain.

14. Man’s power of intellect A. is impossible to explain. B. is due to instinct. C. evolved over millions of years. D. is due to a nonphysical component in the human brain.

15. The "spirit in man" A. has joined with the physical brain of man to form human mind. B. has consciousness of itself. C. is an "immortal soul." D. also exists in the brains of animals.

16. What is the "spirit in man"? A. The Holy Spirit. B. The Holy Ghost C. Spirit essence from Go D. A spirit being.

17. Why can we refer to the spirit in man as "human" spirit? A. Because it is physical in composition. B. Because it is in every human being C. Because it is inherited from our parents. D. Because it is mortal.

18. Which one of the following choices is not true? The spirit in man A. works independently of the brain. B. enables the brain to think, reason and make freewill decisions. C. acts as a computer to store and recall acquired knowledge. D. cannot see, hear or think of itself.

19. Who has hidden the truth about the spirit in man from the world? A. Greek philosophers. B. Protestant reformers. C. Satan, who first deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. D. The true Church of God.

20. Man A. is incomplete with just the human spirit. B. cannot comprehend spiritual truth without the addition of God’s Holy Spirit to the human spirit. C. cannot be begotten of God without the Holy Spirit. D. All of the above.

21. Once a person is begotten by God’s Spirit, he A. becomes wholly composed of spirit. B. must begin to grow in the spiritual character of God. C. does not need to obey God. D. suddenly becomes perfect like God.

22. What must one do to grow in God’s character? A. Study and meditate on the Word of God. B. Converse with God in daily prayer. C. Practice the way of God in his daily life. D. All of the above.

23. What part does God’s Church not play in our spiritual growth? A. It overcomes sin for us. B. God’s children are nourished with spiritual food within the Church. C. God’s chosen ministry "feeds" His children with the Word of God. D. It protects God’s begotten children from false doctrine.

24. What else does the human spirit in man do? A. It imparts miracle-working power to man. B. It imparts the ability to read minds. C. It becomes an indestructible record of our form, personality, knowledge and character. D. Nothing other than make human intellect possible.

25. What happens to the human spirit when a person dies? A. It disintegrates. B. It floats around in space C. It joins with some other person’s brain at birth. D. It goes back to God and is preserved until the resurrection when God will use it to restore the whole individual.

Lesson 16

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 16 Why is Ancient Israel GOD'S "Chosen People"

Why does the Bible talk about Israel so much? Chosen People? What is the connection between God's "chosen people" and spirit-begotten Christians today?

Exactly how does ancient Israel fit into God's plan of salvation? God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Yet He selected the ancient nation of Israel as His "chosen people." Why?

Most people have heard that God raised up ancient Israel to be His special people. Yet almost no one understands that He denied them His Holy Spirit and eternal salvation, except for their prophets and a few select others. Why?

Ancient Israel was God's chosen people—selected not for special favors, but for a special PURPOSE preparatory to the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of God! The Bible is a Book About Israel

It may surprise you to learn that the Bible is primarily concerned with the nation of ancient Israel. And that most other nations are mentioned only as they came into contact with Israel. But why? As we learned in our previous studies, the Creator God is reproducing Himself in and through man. Man's awesome potential is that of being born into the universe-ruling family of God. God's plan is breathtaking beyond words! And the establishment of the ancient nation Israel was an integral part of God's plan.

It is important that we understand God's purpose for the ancient nation of Israel, for without this vital knowledge one cannot fully appreciate and understand the real purpose and incredible potential of mankind! So now let's begin the intriguing story. We will start by retracing the unfolding of God's great Master Plan from Adam and Eve to the founding of the nation Israel. Then on to the establishment of the New Testament Church of God—"spiritual Israel" today. Finally, we'll see what part the peoples of Israel will play in God's plan during and after the Millennium. But before we begin, be sure to get your Bible—if you haven't done so already. It is very important to look up and read each verse of scripture given in answer to the questions. And why not write out these scriptures, just as the kings of ancient Israel were instructed to write out God's laws? (Deuteronomy 17:18-20.) This will help you understand and remember the vital truths you will be studying. Now let's begin this important subject.

LESSON 16 From Adam to Abraham

God created the first humans physically perfect. Yet they were but unfinished pieces of God's workmanship. The spiritual character of God was yet to be built into Adam and Eve and all those who would spring from them. And in the character-building process humans must perform their own vital part. As we learned in Lesson 14, Adam and Eve rejected God as Revealer of spiritual knowledge. In rejecting God they also rejected His government— the way of His law of love. They chose instead Satan's "get" way of life— the self-centered way of vanity, covetousness, envy and

jealousy, competition leading to strife, violence, destruction and rebellion against authority.

Consequently, God shut the first humans and their descendants off from His Holy Spirit and spiritually revealed truth. From then on, spiritual knowledge and salvation would now be offered only to those relatively few God would specially call—until Christ, the second Adam, begins His reign on earth and all the minds of men are opened to God's spiritual truth. As men began to multiply on the earth, all of Adam's sons, except one, followed in his Satan-inspired course of human nature. Prior to Abraham, only three men are specifically mentioned in the Bible as following God's way of life.

1. Which of Adam's sons did Jesus Christ call a "righteous" man? Matthew 23:35.Who are the other two men who "walked with God" prior to Abraham? Genesis 5:22;Genesis 6:9.

2. From which son of Noah is Abram (who later was renamed Abraham by God) descended? Genesis 11:11-27.

COMMENT: Shem was the direct ancestor of Abram. He may have continued for some time in the knowledge and perhaps worship of God. But there is no record of his or anyone else "walking with God" from the time of Noah until Abram. God specially called Abram to have a function' preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

3. Did God tell Abram to leave the land of his kindred and go to a land He would show him? Genesis 12:1.What did God promise him if he would obey? Genesis 12:2-3.

COMMENT: Notice there were two phases to the promises God made to Abram. The first part—that his flesh-born descendants would become a great nation—is purely material and national (Genesis 12:2). The latter part of the promises is spiritual and individual—the promise of the Messiah and salvation through Him (last part of Genesis 12:3).

4. Did Abram obey God's instructions without protest or question? Genesis 12:4. Where did God lead him? Genesis 12:5-7.

5. Did God expand these physical, national promises to Abram? Genesis 17:1-8.

COMMENT: God promised that from Abraham would descend nations and kings, and that Abraham's descendants would be prolific. God also promised to Abraham and his descendants "all the land of Canaan."

6. Were these promises later made unconditional? Genesis 22:15-18.

7. Did God reconfirm the same promises to Isaac, Abraham's son? Genesis 26:1-5.And to Jacob, Isaac's son? Genesis 27:26-29;Genesis 28:13-14;Genesis 35:9-12.What was Jacob's name changed to? Genesis 35:10.

COMMENT: God made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of both national prosperity and the "sceptre" promise of eternal salvation to come through Jesus Christ.

8. Did Jacob (Israel) pass on the blessings of Abraham to his children? Genesis 49:1-2.Who received the "sceptre" promise? Genesis 49:10. And to whom did the birthright blessings go? Genesis 49:22-26; 1 Chronicles 5:2.

9. Did Jacob adopt Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh? Genesis 48:3-5.And did he pass on the birthright—the material promises—to them? Genesis 48:15-20.

COMMENT: The physical, material promises were passed from Jacob to his son Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. (Originally there were twelve sons of Jacob and they became known as the tribes of Israel. But since Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, there were in reality 13 tribes.)

Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong’s book The United States and Britain in Prophecy makes clear who the modern descendants of the birthright tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are, and why they are so blessed today—not because of any righteousness on their part (of which there is little, if any), but because of God’s promises to their faithful forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many assume the birthright tribes are the Jews. But the Jews descend from Judah, and the birthright was Joseph’s!

If you do not have a copy of Mr. Armstrong’s aforementioned book, then by all means send for it immediately. (Use the convenient coupon and envelope found in the middle of this lesson to request your free copy.) If you have already read this book, be sure to review it again. This fascinating volume gives basic background information which space does not permit us to cover thoroughly in this lesson, but which you need to know to fully comprehend the subject we are studying.

Israel Becomes God’s "Chosen People" As previously mentioned, Israel (formerly Jacob) had 12 sons. His favorite son, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers. Joseph was taken to Egypt and eventually became a ruler second only to Pharaoh. A great famine caused the patriarch Israel to send his sons to Egypt to buy food, where they became reacquainted with Joseph.

1. Did Israel, at the request of the Pharaoh and Joseph, move his family into the land of Egypt because of the famine in the land of Canaan where he had lived? Genesis 45:9,Genesis 45:17-18. Where did they settle? Genesis 46:28.

2. Did God promise to eventually bring Israel back out of Egypt? Genesis 46:2-4;Genesis 50:24.

3. While in Egypt, did the children of Israel multiply exceedingly? Exodus 1:7.

4. After Joseph’s death, did another Pharaoh who did not know Joseph make slaves of the children of Israel? Exodus 1:8-14.

5. Did the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob see the affliction of the Israelites in Egypt? Exodus 3:7.Did He promise to deliver them from slavery and to bring them back to the land which He had promised Abraham? Exodus 3:8.

6. Who did God call to lead the nation of Israel out of Egyptian slavery and into the promised land? Exodus 3:1-6,Exodus 3:9-10.

COMMENT: God chose Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. He had previously caused Moses to be specially trained for this mission by having him reared as a prince in the palace of the Egyptian Pharaoh (Exodus 2:1-10). God also commissioned Aaron, his brother, to assist Moses by being his spokesman (Exodus 4:10-16).

7. Did God plan to send plagues against Egypt if Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites leave? Exodus 3:19-20.

COMMENT: In the ensuing plagues God brought upon Egypt, God turned the Egyptian gods and objects of worship against them to show that these were not living, active gods who could help Egypt.

8. What was the last plague that finally caused Pharaoh to let the people go? Exodus 12:29-33.

COMMENT: The Israelites left Egypt at Pharaoh’s urging. But once they were gone, he changed his mind and led his army in pursuit of Israel.

Upon reaching the Red Sea, the children of Israel were stopped in their tracks. They appeared to be trapped. Before them was a broad expanse of water and behind them the Pharaoh’s army was in hot pursuit. There was nothing they could do. They just stood there—helpless! At that point they had to rely on God.

9. How did God rescue Israel? Exodus 14:21-22.

COMMENT: In Egypt God had caused Israel’s release from slavery by a series of supernatural plagues. Now God miraculously caused the waters of the Red Sea to roll back to form a wall of water on either side, causing a wide, dry path on the sea floor between. The Israelites walked through.

10. Did Pharaoh and his entire army attempt to pursue Israel through the Red Sea? Exodus 14:23. What happened to them? Exodus 14:24-31.

COMMENT: Once on the opposite shore of the Red Sea, the Israelites looked back and saw Pharaoh and his army entering the same path they had traversed. When all the soldiers were between the towering walls of water, God allowed the waters to suddenly collapse upon them, drowning the Egyptian army. The Israelites then proceeded toward Mount Sinai where God had them set up camp.

11. At Mount Sinai, what proposition did God make with the children of Israel through His servant Moses? Exodus 19:3-6.Did the people agree to God’s covenant? Exodus 19:7-8. Thus what did Israel become in God’s sight? Leviticus 26:12;Deuteronomy 29:13.COMMENT: God offered Israel a special relationship with Himself. The people wanted to become a "peculiar [not odd, but special] treasure" unto God. They desired to be a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation." They consented to come under God’s theocratic rule and thus became God’s chosen people.

Through Moses, God proposed to the children of Israel a covenant agreement which centuries later came to be known as the "Old Covenant." (The Covenant with Israel at Sinai was a type and forerunner of the NEW COVENANT. The latter will be made with the New Testament CHURCH, which is spiritual Israel. The subject of the Old and New Covenants will be covered in-depth in Lesson 17.)

12. Once the covenant was ratified, what material blessings did God promise Israel—if they would obey His commandments? Deuteronomy 28:1-14;Leviticus 26:1-13.

13. Did God also promise that Israel would become a great nation if they obeyed Him? Deuteronomy 4:5-8.Would Israel thus have been an example for all nations on earth to follow? Same verses.

COMMENT: If Israel kept God's commandments, every imaginable material blessing would have been theirs. And other nations would have seen their example and blessings, and would have wanted to obey God too!

14. But what curses would result if Israel disobeyed God? Deuteronomy 28:14-68;Leviticus 26:14-39.

15. Was Israel commanded to choose—material blessings and long life on the one hand, or curses and death on the other? Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

COMMENT: God laid everything out before Israel. He gave them His law which they were to obey and detailed exactly what would happen if they chose to obey or to disobey. If they would obey His laws and submit to His government, He would prosper them, making them the wealthiest and most powerful of nations. But notice in all this that God promised only national and material blessings. There was no promise of eternal life. He did NOT offer them spiritual salvation!

Israel Makes the Wrong Choice

Now let's look at what Israel did once the knowledge of God's way of life was given to them and they agreed to obey God.

1. After the covenant between God and Israel was ratified, God called Moses up to Mount Sinai where he stayed for 40 days. What did the Israelites request of Aaron while Moses was gone? Exodus 32:1.How did Aaron respond? Exodus 32:2-5.

COMMENT: Soon after Israel entered into a covenant relationship with God—promising to obey Him—they forgot the God who had spoken to them directly and who had miraculously delivered them from slavery in Egypt! They built a golden calf and worshipped it, breaking the first and second commandments!

2. What was the result of Israel's sin? Exodus 32:35.

COMMENT: God's anger waxed hot against Israel (Exodus 32:10). Nevertheless, Moses interceded for them to God so that they were not all destroyed (Exodus 32:11-14).

3. In the second year after leaving Egypt, when Israel had reached the wilderness of Paran, God commanded Moses to send out 12 scouts to Canaan. What were they to do? Numbers 13:17-20.

4. What kind of report did the men bring back? Numbers 13:25-28, Numbers 13:32-33. As a result, did the people of Israel complain against God and want to return to Egypt? Numbers 14:1-4.

COMMENT: Because Israel refused to go forward in faith to possess the promised land, God sentenced them to wander in the wilderness 40 years, until everyone 20 years of age and over (except the two faithful scouts, Joshua and Caleb) died (Numbers 14:11-38). Hence that generation of Israelites was not allowed to enter the promised land. But their children entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, Moses' successor.

5. Did God bless the next generation of Israel as He had promised He would for their obedience? Joshua 21:43-45.

COMMENT: God was faithful in His covenant with Israel. He prospered them abundantly for their obedience under Joshua's righteous leadership.

6. Did the people of Israel continue to obey God after Joshua's death? Judges 2:8,Judges 2:10-13.

COMMENT: A new generation turned away from God and reaped the curses they had been warned about. But in mercy God sent judges to Israel to rescue them from oppressors. Yet as soon as the judge died the people returned to idolatry (Judges 2:18-19). This happened repeatedly. In the days of Samuel Israel committed an even greater sin. They rejected God as their king—demanding a human king, to which God consented (1 Samuel 8:4-8).

Still, God dealt with Israel. Under the later reigns of David and his son Solomon God prospered the nation greatly. However, because Solomon committed idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-8), after his death God divided the nation in two—the House of Israel in the north and the House of Judah in the south (1 Kings 11:29-38).

Throughout the reigns of many kings, God pleaded with His people Israel and Judah through His prophets—admonishing them to return to His way. But for hundreds of years they refused to learn the lesson that experience should have taught them.

Finally, just as He warned He would, God sent the House of Israel into Assyria captivity, with Judah going into Babylonian captivity a century and a quarter later.

Why They Broke Their Promise

Why did Israel fail to keep the covenant they made with God, even though God revealed to them His laws, established His government over them and they agreed to obey Him? To answer this we need to understand God's purpose in choosing Israel to be His people.

1. What was the reason God made Israel His chosen people? Deuteronomy 7:6-11;Deuteronomy 10:15.

COMMENT: God chose Israel above all other nations on earth to be His own nation because of His love for and promises to their forefathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As God's chosen nation, Israel was to set an example of obedience to God for all the other nations to follow (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). But instead of assuming the leadership role among the nations by keeping God's commandments, they followed the ways and customs of the pagan nations around them! They utterly failed to become a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6)and an example for the world to follow. But why? Wasn't it possible for them to obey God? The answer to this question brings us to the crux of this lesson!

2. What is the heart, or mind, of man described as? Jeremiah 17:9.Is it possible for carnal man, without God's Spirit, to submit to God's Law? Romans 8:7.

3. And is it at all possible for one without God's Spirit to really understand spiritual knowledge—which includes the spiritual principles of God's laws? 1 Corinthians 2:9-11,1 Corinthians 2:14.

COMMENT: Man’s nature can be very sinful without God’s Spirit (Galatians 5:19-21). This, as we learned in previous lessons, is because Satan, the god of this world, "broadcasts" his nature—his attitudes of sin—to the minds of all people (2 Corinthians 4:4;Ephesians 2:2).

Israel as a whole was not offered God’s Spirit. Only their prophets and divinely appointed leaders were given the Holy Spirit (Numbers 14:24;1 Peter 1:10-11). Thus the Israelites did not resist Satan and submit to God.

Ancient Israel did not realize their lack of God’s power when they agreed to the terms of the Old Covenant. They desperately needed spiritual help, but didn’t realize it. They even had great difficulty in keeping the letter of the law!

Without God’s Spirit, Israel was also limited to the acquisition and understanding of material knowledge, even though God gave them knowledge of His spiritual laws. Thus they could not comprehend, let alone obey, the spiritual intent of God’s Law!

Recall that Adam and Eve had also been instructed by God in His way. But they too rejected it, and turned to the way of self-centeredness—of vanity, lust and greed—of jealousy and envy—of competition and strife.

4. Did God realize, when He made the covenant with Israel, that the people would not be able to keep it? Deuteronomy 5:28-29.Did God give them the spiritual perception to understand the lessons they should have learned from their 40 years of wandering in the desert? Deuteronomy 29:4.Did God know Israel would not obey Him after they entered the promised land? Deuteronomy 31:20.

COMMENT: God knew Israel would break the covenant He made with them. But He wanted to teach mankind a valuable lesson through Israel’s experience and horrible example. The multiple generations of Israel and Judah proved once and for all that without the Holy Spirit from God, man’s mind is incapable of receiving and utilizing knowledge of God’s spiritual way of life as defined by His spiritual Law—the Ten Commandments. Thus God demonstrated through Israel that the mind of man, with the "human" spirit but without the addition of God’s Holy Spirit, cannot submit to God nor solve human problems and evils which are spiritual in nature. Carnal man simply cannot come to grips with and cure the spiritual problems that beset humanity!

God used ancient Israel to write in the pages of history these indelible lessons, which God intends all mankind to learn when the time comes for spiritual understanding to be opened to all—not only to those ancient Israelites, but to every human being who has ever lived!

Spiritual Israel Being Called Today The promises made to Abraham were twofold—material and spiritual. Even so, the Holy Spirit and eternal salvation were not offered to ancient Israel as a whole, except to those few called by God to carry out a special mission preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Let’s now trace the spiritual phase of the promises from the time of Abraham to this present day.

1. What, exactly, was the second part of the promises God made to Abraham? Genesis 12:3,last part.

COMMENT: The second phase of the promises—"in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"—refers ultimately to the Messiah and salvation through Him. This promise was passed on through Abraham's son Isaac, and then to his son Jacob, as was the material part of the promises (Genesis 26:1-5;Genesis 35:9-12).

2. To which of Jacob's 12 sons was the spiritual promise passed? Genesis 49:10;John 4:22.

COMMENT: The "sceptre" was the promise of a kingly line springing from Judah and culminating in Jesus Christ and eternal life through Him.

3. Does Luke 3:23,prove that Jesus was a direct descendant—a "seed"—of Abraham? Did He clearly spring from the tribe of Judah? Luke 3:33. Also notice Hebrews 7:14.

COMMENT: Luke records Jesus' genealogy through His mother Mary. Joseph, mentioned in Luke 3:23,was actually the son-in-law of Heli, the father of Mary. And so Luke shows that Jesus was directly descended from Abraham (Luke 3:34).

One of the reasons Christ came to earth as a human being nearly 2,000 years ago was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to a remnant of Israelites who were then living in Palestine. He commanded them: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15). But notice that God did not remove the spiritual blindness which still covered these descendants of Israel at that time.

4. Why did Jesus speak to the multitudes in parables? Mark 4:10-11.Was it to make His teaching clearer? Mark 4:12. Wasn't this a fulfillment of a prophecy found in Isaiah? Isaiah 28:11-13.

COMMENT: God did not intend to grant spiritual understanding and repentance to the descendants of Israel as a whole when Christ first came. Israel's chance for salvation is still ahead, as we will shortly see.

5. Recall from previous studies that no one can come to Christ and be truly converted unless the Father calls him (John 6:44). After three and one-half years of preaching, how many did the Father call to be disciples of Christ? Acts 1:15.

COMMENT: Of the many thousands who had heard Jesus proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, there were only 120 who believed!

6. Had Jesus previously promised to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples? John 16:7;John 14:26.Where did Christ tell them to wait to receive God's Spirit? Luke 24:49.

7. When did God fulfill the promise of sending His Holy Spirit? Acts 2:1-4.

COMMENT: On Pentecost, A.D. 31, just 50 days after Christ's resurrection, God sent the Holy Spirit to beget and empower Christ's disciples.

8. Who stood up to speak to the multitudes of Jews gathered from various nations on that day of Pentecost? Acts 2:14.As a result of his sermon, how many more did God call? Acts 2:41. What did they do to receive God's Spirit? Acts 2:38.

9. Once these new converts received God's Spirit, what did they automatically become part of? 1 Corinthians 12:13.What body is Paul talking about? 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23;Colossians 1:18.

COMMENT: In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the apostle Paul has drawn an analogy between the human body and God’s Church. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 he is speaking about being "baptized"—put into—the spiritual "body" or Church of God. Thus when one receives God’s Spirit, he automatically becomes a spirit-begotten member of God’s Church. (If you have any questions about whether God has called you to put you into His Church, don’t hesitate to request a visit by one of our ministers to counsel you about this important spiritual matter. Lesson 12 contains instructions on how to contact a minister of the Worldwide Church of God near you.) But those God called into His Church on that memorable day of Pentecost were Jews, or Jewish proselytes (Acts 2:5,Acts 2:14). There were no Gentile (non-Jewish) converts at that time.

10. When and how did God finally open up salvation to the Gentiles? You should read all of Acts 10:1-48, noticing especially Acts 10:34-35. Also see Acts 28:28.

COMMENT: About ten years after God started His spiritual Church, He began to call Gentiles to repentance and salvation. But the promises of salvation were made to Abraham and his descendants! How, then, could a Gentile also become an heir to these promises?

11. How does one who is not a direct descendant of Abraham become an "heir" to the spiritual promises made to him? Galatians 3:27-29.

COMMENT: Paul shows that the only way Gentiles can become heirs to the promise of salvation made to Abraham was by becoming children ("seed") of Abraham by spiritual sonship through Christ! Thus people from every nation may become "heirs" of the spiritual promises God made to Abraham by becoming his "seed" through Christ.

We also read in Galatians 3:7,"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." If you are a spirit-begotten Christian, regardless of race, Abraham is your "father" in the faith, and you become eligible to inherit the spiritual promises! But what about Israelites? Is it enough to be an Israelite by natural birth? Or must they also become Christ’s to receive these promises? In Romans 11:1-36, Paul illustrates spiritual sonship through Christ by way of the analogy of grafting branches onto an olive tree.

12. Does Paul show that the Israelites, represented by the branches of an olive tree, has been spiritually blinded? Romans 11:7,Romans 11:25. Why? Romans 11:20, Romans 11:32.

COMMENT: God has allowed Israel to be spiritually blinded to fulfill His plan. And that plan includes the salvation of the world, including Israel!

13. Has Israel’s being broken off the olive tree made possible the Gentiles being grafted in? Romans 11:17, Romans 11:24.

COMMENT: Paul pictures Israel as a natural olive tree whose branches were broken off because of unbelief—disobedience to God. This made possible God’s grafting in of the wild olive branches— Gentiles.

14. But can Israel—though now "broken off"—be grafted back in? Romans 11:23-24.

COMMENT: Ancient Israel’s blindness will not remain forever. Their time of understanding and participation in God’s plan of salvation has not yet come (Romans 11:26). But in the meantime the

comparatively few Israelites whom God has called have become "spiritual Israelites." Through Christ, both they and Gentiles have become members of the spiritual household of God (Ephesians 2:19)and are unified into one spiritual body—the Church of God! (Galatians 3:28.) 15. Ancient Israel did not have access to God's Spirit. Yet what are they called? 1 Chronicles 13:2;Acts 7:38.

COMMENT: Israel was called the "congregation of Israel" and a "church" because these people were the physical type of the spiritual Church Christ began to build at His first coming (Matthew 16:18). This is another example of the duality principle in God's plan.

God is preparing the Kingdom of God in dual stages. First was Old Testament Israel. They were carnal-minded, without God's Holy Spirit. They were the carnal congregation or church of Israel. In New Testament times, spirit-begotten children of God are the spiritual Church of God, composed of members of all nationalities who have become "spiritual Israelites" through Christ. (This DUALITY in God's program is illustrated by the Old and New Covenants, to be covered in the next lesson.) The New Testament Church of God has received the Spirit of God. And those in God's Church are being prepared by God through His Spirit to be born into His ruling family which will restore His government on earth at Christ's return!

16. Are those in the body or Church of Christ a part of the spiritual household of God? Ephesians 2:19.Who constitutes the foundation of this building? Ephesians 2:19-22.

COMMENT: Paul here compares God's Church to a building. The Old Testament prophets—along with the New Testament apostles—form the foundation of the true Church, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone.

17. Did the patriarchs and prophets of antiquity—those whom God called before Christ established His New Testament Church—have access to the Holy Spirit? 1 Peter 1:10-11.

COMMENT: Notice that the Spirit of Christ...was in them." God gave His Spirit only to those whom He called to perform special tasks. Those few had the Holy Spirit and will be born into God's Kingdom, as we're clearly told in Hebrews 11:1-40.

Likewise, those called into God's Church today also have a great work to perform. Christ has commissioned His Church today to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the entire world! (Matthew 28:19-20;Matthew 24:14.)

18. Are those in God's Church also in training for responsibilities in the World Tomorrow? Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:4.

COMMENT: Spiritual Israel today is being trained to rule with Christ as a spiritual "kingdom of priests" when He returns. They will help Him restore the government of God over the entire earth and teach the nations God's wonderful way of life! But what about ancient Israel and their descendants? Did that carnal nation fail totally? Will it yet have a chance to set an example for the rest of the world to follow?

God's MODEL Millennial Nation!

God reveals He has not forsaken His chosen people. He has not forgotten His covenant with ancient Israel. God will yet give Israel's modern descendants an opportunity to live by His laws though their forefathers failed for thousands of years. This time they will obey! Let's understand how God will bring this about in the very near future.

1. Did God know Abraham's descendants would forsake Him and His way? Deuteronomy 31:16.How would God punish them? Deuteronomy 31:17-18; Deuteronomy 4:25-28.

COMMENT: Ancient Israel did forsake God, committing grievous sins as He knew they would. As punishment for their disobedience, God caused them to be taken captive and scattered among the nations. Today only a small minority of their descendants, mainly from the tribe of Judah, now live in the modern state of Israel—part of the "promised land" of ancient Israel.

2. As aforementioned book, The United States and Britain in Prophecy explains, Biblical prophecy reveals that the birthright tribes of Israel (Ephraim and Manasseh) will be taken captive once again because of their continued national sins. Will the modern descendants of Israel be scattered all over the earth? Isaiah 11:11-12.Will they turn to God in their tribulation in the end time? Isaiah 4:25-28.

COMMENT: Ancient Israel did forsake God, committing grievous sins as Deuteronomy 4:29-30.(Notice especially the words "latter days" in Deuteronomy 4:30) Will God then remember the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Deuteronomy 4:31.

3. Will God bring His captive people back to the land He promised Abraham? Deuteronomy 30:1-5.What is the time setting for the regathering of the remnant of Israel? Isaiah 27:12-13.

COMMENT: The blowing of the "great trumpet" refers to the "last trump" signaling Jesus Christ's return to earth as King of kings (1 Thessalonians 4:16;Revelation 11:15). At His return Christ will seek out and bring back the remnant of Israel from this modern captivity. Those still alive after the soon-coming great tribulation will be brought back to the land of Palestine where all 13 tribes will be settled after their former estates.

4. Will this coming exodus of God's people Israel from captivity around the world be much greater than their former exodus from Egypt in the days of Moses? Jeremiah 16:14-15;Jeremiah 23:3,Jeremiah 23:7-8.

COMMENT: Jeremiah's God-inspired prophecy of this future exodus was written about 600 B.C. The first exodus was only a lesser type or forerunner of a second and far greater exodus to come!

Notice that these regathered Israelites are not changed to immortality when Christ returns, but rather restored to the promised land of ancient times as physical human beings.

5. Once back in the land promised to their forefather Abraham, will God reunite the nations of Judah and Israel? Ezekiel 37:16-22.Who will be their king? Ezekiel 37:24-25.

COMMENT: At Christ's return, David, who ruled as king over all the tribes of Israel during his mortal lifetime, will be resurrected to immortality. And as God promised long ago, David will once again become Israel's king after God unites the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel.

6. Will God cause His reclaimed people to see themselves as He sees them and to loathe themselves for their wickedness, granting them repentant attitudes for the first time? Ezekiel 20:42-44;Jeremiah 31:8-9;Jeremiah 50:3-5.Will God then cleanse them from sin? Ezekiel 36:24-25;Jeremiah 33:7-8.Will He also give them His Holy Spirit so they can obey Him? Ezekiel 36:26-27;Ezekiel 11:19-20.

COMMENT: Israel will repent bitterly of their wickedness which caused God to temporarily forsake them and allow them to go into national captivity—to wake them up! They will then truly seek God, repent of their sins, receive God's Holy Spirit, and enter into a "perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 50:5). This was not possible during the days of the Old Covenant when the nation as a whole was without God's Spirit.

Recall that without the Holy Spirit ancient Israel did not have the "heart" to obey God (Deuteronomy 5:29;Deuteronomy 29:4). But once God gives His Spirit to His chosen people, they will remain obedient, not departing from His way of life (Jeremiah 32:39-40). It is God's Holy Spirit that will make the difference! Israel will be able to understand God's way and obey Him from the heart!

7. Will God proceed to teach repentant, spirit-begotten Israel the knowledge and understanding of His way of life? Isaiah 54:13;Jeremiah 3:15.Will this ultimately lead to their being born into the ruling family of God? Isaiah 45:17;Romans 11:26-27.

8. Will God cause the laws of nature to function for the benefit of His obedient people during the Millennium? Isaiah 41:18;Ezekiel 34:26;Malachi 3:10-12.Will there be great rejoicing over the abundance of crops and cattle God will bestow upon them? Jeremiah 31:12.Will there be a superabundance of foodstuffs? Amos 9:13.

COMMENT: During the Millennium, God will bestow upon obedient Israel all of the great material blessings He promised to give their ancestors had they obeyed (Leviticus 26:1-46; Deuteronomy 28:1-68).

Although the British Commonwealth and the United States—Ephraim and Manasseh—have been the wealthiest and most powerful nations on earth in this end time (because of Abraham's obedience to God), their status among nations today is only a foretaste of even "greater wealth and power (in God's service) to come once all of Israel is living under the government of God.

9. Abraham's offspring were prophesied to become extremely numerous (Genesis 13:16). Will Israel's population reach its zenith in the Millennium? Ezekiel 36:10-11;Isaiah 60:21-22.How does God describe this future explosive spread of Israelites into every part of the globe? Isaiah 27:6.

10. Will Israel inherit the whole world? Isaiah 54:2-4.Thus will all nations be blessed because of Abraham's "seed"? Genesis 28:14.But how? Isaiah 61:9;Isaiah 62:1-2,Isaiah 62:7. Will the Gentiles therefore want to learn God's way and become obedient to Christ? Isaiah 2:1-3.

COMMENT: Israel was intended to be a blessing to the rest of the world both materially and spiritually. The Gentiles similarly will be blessed as they follow Israel's outstanding EXAMPLE of obedience to God! And they too will be blessed spiritually by becoming Abraham's "seed"—spiritual Israelites—through Christ (Galatians 3:28-29), becoming spirit-begotten and finally spirit-born into the very Family of God! In the Millennium Israel will truly become God's

model nation—the leader all nations will want to follow. But what about those ancient Israelites who died in their sins long ago? Will they also have a chance to repent, receive God’s Spirit, obey God, and become members of His ruling family?

Ancient Israel to Become a "Holy Nation"

"God hath not cast away his people [Israel] which he foreknow," wrote the apostle Paul (Romans 11:2). Ancient Israel will also have a chance to receive God’s Holy Spirit and obey God from the heart. But how is this possible? These Israelites have been dead for thousands of years! Exactly where do the people of ancient Israel fit into God’s wonderful master plan?

1. Is it God’s will that all mankind come to understand the truth about His master plan? 1 Timothy 2:4;2 Peter 3:9.Will all Israel therefore be given an opportunity to receive spiritual salvation? Romans 11:26.

2. Is a resurrection to physical life prophesied to occur after the Millennium? Revelation 20:5 (first part), 11-13.

COMMENT: All those who have ever lived and died since Adam and who were without the knowledge of God’s plan of salvation will be resurrected and given a chance to understand! This resurrection to physical life occurs after the Millennium (Revelation 20:4,6). Those resurrected at this time will live for 100 years (Isaiah 65:20).

These physical mortals will have their first genuine chance to receive God’s Holy Spirit, grow in God’s holy, righteous character and be born into the universe-ruling family of God! They will be taught God’s way of life and be judged by the Word of God (Revelation 20:12)--just as those in God’s Church are being Judged today (1 Peter 4:17). (The surprising truth about this coming time of judgment will be the subject of a future lesson.)

3. Will ancient Israel come up in the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:1-15? Ezekiel 37:1-11.Notice especially Ezekiel 37:11. What will Israel say when God restores them to physical, mortal life? Ezekiel 37:11, last part. How will God answer? Ezekiel 37:12. What will God give them? Ezekiel 37:14. Will ancient Israel then know the true God? Ezekiel 37:13.

COMMENT: There is no injustice with God. He will deny no one an opportunity for spiritual salvation. Everyone is to have his full chance, including all those ancient Israelites who died without ever having an opportunity to know God’s plan. They will be resurrected and given their chance—and without a devil to tempt them! The illustration of the "valley of dry bones" in Ezekiel 37:1-28 shows the whole House of Israel—those spiritually blinded who lived and died without a chance—resurrected back to mortal life as before. It shows their understanding being opened—the knowledge of God’s way of life coming to them for the first time as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit of God.

Then ancient Israel will finally become Abraham’s spiritual children, and heirs to the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Finally, as God inspired Paul to write, "all Israel shall be saved." Israel as a whole will have fulfilled her God-ordained purpose! She will have become the "holy nation" God originally intended (Exodus 19:6).

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. After Adam and Eve rejected God as Revealer of spiritual knowledge, God A. limited spiritual knowledge and salvation to the descendants of Abraham. B. called the majority of men and women prior to Christ's first coming. C. offered the Holy Spirit to all their descendants. D. shut off the first humans and their descendants from His Holy Spirit and revealed truth.

2. Prior to Abraham, only three men are specifically mentioned in the Bible as having followed God's way. They were: A. Shem, Ham and Japheth. B. Seth, Lamech and Jared. C. Abel, Enoch and Noah.D. Enos, Moses and Isaiah.

3. The first part of the promises God made to Abraham was A. the promise of the Messiah and salvation through Him. B. material and national—that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation C. spiritual and therefore individual in nature. D. not fulfilled in any way.

4. The second part of the promises God made to Abraham was A. spiritual and individual—the promise of the Messiah and salvation through Him. B. that his descendants would inherit all the land of Canaan. C. that his descendants would be prolific. D. that his descendants would become a great nation.

5. The birthright promise A. was not passed on for want of a legitimate heir. B. was passed on to the Jews. C. was passed on to Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, when Jacob adopted them. D. stated that Christ would be blessed materially.

6. The "sceptre" promise went A. to Judah. B. went to Joseph. C. has never been fulfilled. D. has nothing to do with eternal salvation through Jesus Christ.

7. The descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh today have been blessed abundantly only because A. of their obedience to God. B. their forefathers were Jacob's favorite grandsons. C. of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. D. of time and chance.

8. Which one of the following is not true? A. The children of Israel multiplied greatly in number. B. Eventually the Israelites became slaves of Egypt, helpless to change their circumstances. C. God's miraculous intervention through a series of miracles set Israel free of Pharaoh. D. God encouraged the tribes of Israel to blend into the surrounding nations so as not to be conspicuous.

9. God offered the nation of Israel A. only material and national blessings. B. nothing in return for obedience to Him. C. the Holy Spirit. D. spiritual understanding and salvation.

10. The children of Israel agreed to become God's chosen people A. immediately after they crossed the Red Sea. B. at Mount Sinai. C. in Egypt when they kept the first Passover. D. out of

respect for their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

11. God chose Israel above all other nations on earth because A. they were the best candidate to be a "holy nation." B. of the natural leadership ability of the twelve tribes. C. they were already obedient. D. of His love for and promises to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

12. Instead of setting an example for the surrounding nations, ancient Israel A. assumed an overbearing leadership role in the region. B. followed the ways and customs of the pagan nations around them. C. asked that God would be their king. D. forsook their promised land and voluntarily moved to Assyrian territory.

13. What did God do to His people after pleading with them for centuries to obey Him? A. He sent them into captivity as punishment. B. He forced them to obey Him. C. He rejected them and chose another nation as His own. D. He continued to plead with them for several more centuries.

14. Israel didn’t keep its part of the covenant with God because A. blessings for obedience never came when they followed righteous leaders. B. the blessings were insufficient for the effort required. C. in lacking God’s Holy Spirit, they couldn’t resist Satan and submit their carnal natures to God. D. of their spiritual comprehension of God’s Law.

15. The record written in human experience by Israel and Judah proves A. nothing for us today. B. that disobedience was unique to them. C. that given enough time they finally would have obeyed God. D. that without the Holy Spirit man is incapable of understanding God’s spiritually revealed truth and obeying the Ten Commandments from the heart.

16. Why did Jesus speak to the Israelites in Judea in parables? A. To make plain the truth of God. B. To maintain the spiritual blindness of the majority because their time to understand had not yet come. C. So they would understand and repent. D. To gather a large following of true believers.

17. When did God start to open spiritual understanding to the Gentiles after founding His New Testament Church? A. Simultaneously with the Jewish converts. B. One year later. C. About ten years later. D. Just after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

18. Which one of the following is not true? A. Gentiles (non-Israelites) can become heirs to the spiritual promises made to Abraham by becoming spiritual "children" of Abraham through Christ. B. Israelites by birth must also become Christ’s to receive the spiritual promises. C. To date, comparatively few natural-born Israelites have been called by God to become spiritual Israelites. D. The spiritual promises made to Abraham pertain to flesh-born Israelites only.

19. Why did God call ancient Israel a "congregation" and a "church" even though they did not have the Holy Spirit? A. These people were a physical type of the spiritual Church that was to be established when Christ came. B. Duality in God’s plan certainly has nothing to do with it. C. Because the nation was deeply religious. D. Because the Israelites were churchgoers.

20. Spiritual Israel today A. is the Church of God composed of spiritual Israelites, whether Israelite or gentile by birth. B. is in training to rule with Christ when He comes. C. has been called by God to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. D. All of the above.

21. Another captivity of Israelites A. will never happen. B. is to happen with modern-day descendants being taken as slaves to nations all over the earth. C. will be mild compared to the former captivity. D. will not include the Jews.

22. Which of the following will not happen to the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel? A. God will allow all of them to die in captivity as punishment for past sins. B. At Christ's return He will rescue the remnant of Israel from captivity. C. The coming exodus of Israel out of captivity will be far greater than their former exodus from Egypt. D. Christ will restore these regathered Israelites to the promised land where He will make them a model nation.

23. How will the Israelites respond to God when restored to the land of their forefathers? A. They will rebel against Him as before. B. They will reject David as their king. C. They will resist unification of the nation. D. They will repent bitterly, turn to God in obedience, and become an example for other nations to follow.

24. What will not contribute to Israel's obedience toward God? A. Their realization, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, of having sinned against God. B. Their receipt of the Holy Spirit which will help them to obey. C. Attending church regularly on Sunday. D. Their appreciation for God's manifold mercy.

25. What does the "valley of dry bones" in Ezekiel 37:1-28 picture? A. The utter desolation at the close of human misrule. B. The destruction of all mankind. C. A resurrection to spiritual life. D. Millions of ancient Israelites being physically resurrected after the Millennium to receive their first chance to understand God's master plan, develop His character and receive eternal life.

Lesson 17

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 17 The Simple Truth About the Old and New Covenants

Exactly what are the Old and New Covenants? And what do these covenants have to do with Spirit-begotten Christians today? A COMMON belief today is that the Ten Commandments did not exist until Moses' at Mt. Sinai and that they lasted only until Jesus Christ's death.

According to this teaching, Jesus came to establish a New Covenant containing only grace and promises—but certainly no law.

Surprising as it may seem to many professing Christians, God's Law did not begin when God made the covenant at Mt. Sinai with ancient Israel. The law of God had been in full force and effect since before Adam!

God's Law Before Adam To fully understand the truth about the Old and New Covenants, we need to be reminded of a very basic fact: God's law of love existed long before Adam and Eve!

We learned in a previous lesson that the way of life by which the two members of the God family have always lived is the way of love. God has always loved the Word and the Word has always loved God. The two have lived in perfect harmony from eternity (John 10:30). The love they have for each other—this way of life—is the attitude motivating all that the God family does. The love of God is out-flowing toward others. God is concerned about the welfare of all His created beings. God's love is the attitude of cooperation, serving, helping. It is the way of "give" instead of "get." The eternal God has ordained that we all learn to live His way of love. And how is God's love defined? "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). But to what commandments is the apostle John referring? When the Word was the human Jesus Christ nearly 2,000 years ago, someone asked Him a similar question. Christ answered, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 19:18-19). Jesus obviously was talking about the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments constitute a spiritual law that is inexorable and eternal—a law that is love and the fulfillment of which is love (Romans 13:10). The essence of God's spiritual law is love toward God and love toward fellowman (Matthew 22:36-40). The first four of the Ten Commandments teach us how to love God. And the last six teach us how to love our fellowman.

Since God's very nature is love (1 John 4:16), His law reflects His nature, describing His loving character. And since God's character will never change (Malachi 3:6;Hebrews 13:8), His spiritual law will never change or be done away! (Psalms 111:7-8.)

Results of Sin

Why don't we have universal peace, harmony and cooperation in the world today? Because of the transgression of God's law of love! Disobedience to the Ten Commandments has produced all the

discord, unhappiness, suffering and death the world has experienced since Adam! Our previous lessons revealed that the government of God was established on earth when God placed angels here to finish its creation. God's government, which is based on His law of love, regulated the angels' activities. It regulated their relationship with God and with each other.

There was peace, harmony, joy and accomplishment on earth—until the anointed cherub Lucifer rebelled against the government of God and sinned (2 Peter 2:4). A third of the angels followed him in this rebellion. Paul said sin cannot be imputed if there is no law to transgress! (Romans 5:13.) Since Lucifer and the angels sinned, there had to be a law they transgressed! That law was God's law of love. The faithful angels have continued to live by God's commandments (Psalms 103:20-21).

Much later, God created the first man and woman. He instructed them in His way. God revealed that living by His law of love would result in happiness, joy and material abundance. Thus God taught the Ten Commandments to Adam and Eve. He also revealed the results of disobeying that law.

After instructing the first man and woman in His way, God required them to make a choice. Adam, in order to receive God's Holy Spirit (symbolized by the "tree of life") and restore the government of God to earth, would have to reject Satan's way of "get" and follow God's way of "give"—the way of His law of love. At that time the former Lucifer, now Satan the devil, was there in the garden of Eden to tempt the first humans.

Adam chose to reject God. He made this fateful decision for himself and the whole world which has descended from him. God therefore drove our first parents out of the garden of Eden and shut mankind off from access to the Holy Spirit. From then on, God would reveal the true knowledge and understanding of His spiritual law and plan only to those of His choosing (John 6:44;1 Peter 1:10-12). Man would not have free access to God's Holy Spirit and spiritual understanding again until Christ's return to put an end to Satan's reign (Revelation 20:1-3).

During the succeeding nearly six millennial "days" of Satan's rule, those relatively few whom God has called—His "firstfruits"—have indeed received His Holy Spirit and been begotten spiritually. They now have the opportunity to enter into a special covenant relationship with God!

God's Covenants With Man

God has made a number of covenants with humans. There were the covenants with the patriarchs Noah and Abraham and with King David. God also made a covenant with the ancient nation of Israel, which was later called the "Old Covenant." But the most important covenant—the "New Covenant"—is yet to be made in the future!

Exactly what are the Old and New Covenants? What does the Bible say was the fault of the Old and why is the New necessary? How can we enter into a New Covenant relationship with God and when will the New Covenant be made?

Before you begin this study, be sure to get your Bible so you can turn to and read all the verses given in answer to the questions in this lesson. You will also find it very profitable to copy these verses in a notebook. This will not only enable you to easily review your studies at any time in the future, it will also help you to remember these important Scriptures. Now let's begin another

fascinating study!

LESSON 17 Difference Between a Covenant and a Testament

One of the most important doctrines the living Christ has revealed to His Church is that of the "Old" and "New Covenants." Unfortunately, many carelessly confuse the word "covenant" with "testament." A testament is not a covenant, and a covenant is not a testament. Yet common religious usage seems to confuse them. It is important, at the outset, to understand the difference. A "testament" is an act or written instrument by which a person bequeaths or wills certain of his possessions to another. It usually is not a payment or reward for work or obligation performed. But a covenant, comments Webster, is "a mutual agreement, a legal undertaking to do or to refrain from some act; a document containing the terms of agreement." In biblical usage a covenant is a contract, or agreement, by which one party promises certain rewards or payments in return for certain stipulated performance by the other party. Let’s notice now the covenant God made with one of the patriarchs.

1. What was the covenant God made with Abraham? Genesis 12:1-7;Genesis 15:18.What were the terms or conditions Abraham had to fulfill in order that he and his descendants might receive the promises of God’s covenant with him? Genesis 12:1;Genesis 17:1-9.

COMMENT: Notice that Abraham was to depart the land of his birth for the territory of Canaan. Another requirement Abraham had to fulfill as his part of the covenant was to walk before God and be "perfect" or upright. If Abraham would comply, then God, in turn, bound Himself to fulfill the specific promises in His covenant with Abraham.

Notice that no death had to take place to make this covenant binding as would have been necessary if this were a testament.

2. Did God establish the same covenant with Abraham’s son Isaac? Genesis 17:19.To which of Isaac’s sons was the covenant later passed? Genesis 27:27-30.

COMMENT: God’s covenant with Abraham was confirmed to Isaac and to his son Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

Years later, because of a great famine in the land of Canaan, where Israel lived, the patriarch and his family moved to Goshen in Egypt. There his descendants grew into a large nation. Through circumstances beyond their control, they eventually became enslaved to the Egyptians.

3. Did God look down upon the captive children of Israel and remember His covenant with their forefathers? Exodus 2:23-25.

COMMENT: Through a series of miracles God released the children of Israel from bondage and led them out of Egypt.

God’s Covenant With Ancient Israel 1. Where did God lead the Israelites on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land? Exodus 19:1-2.

2. Did God propose to make a covenant with the children of Israel? Exodus 19:3-6. What would be the peoples’ part of the agreement? Exodus 19:5. What would be God’s part of the agreement? Exodus 19:5-6.

COMMENT: Through Moses, God proposed a covenant with the Israelites. In it God promised to make them a great nation if they would obey Him. Notice the very large IF in this covenant agreement.

3. Did the people agree to God’s condition? Exodus 19:8.

COMMENT: The people glibly agreed. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do...," they promised. They were so certain of their own ability to obey God that they readily affirmed they would abide by the covenant.

4. Since the Israelites expressed their desire to enter into a covenant with God, what did He inform Moses He would do on the third day? Exodus 19:11. How does the Bible describe this awesome event? Exodus 19:16-20.

5. Exactly what did God tell the people they had to do to obey Him—to fulfill their part of the covenant with God? Exodus 20:1-17;Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

COMMENT: On the third day, amid an awesome display of lightning, thunder and thick clouds swirling over the mountain, God’s powerful voice thundered in their ears the basic law of His government—the great spiritual law defining, in principle, God’s way of life. This covenant made at Sinai—called the "Old Covenant" today—imposed upon the people of Israel certain terms and conditions to be performed. The people were to keep the Ten Commandments. And the reward for obedience would be to make Israel a nation "above all people." Notice that the promises were purely national and material. There was no mention of spiritual blessings.

6. Did God, with His own finger, write these commandments on tables of stone? Deuteronomy 5:22;Deuteronomy 4:13.

7. After God had given the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, what did He instruct Moses to set before the people? Deuteronomy 6:1;Deuteronomy 4:5.

COMMENT: God revealed to Moses additional laws—various applications of the Ten Commandments in the form of civil statutes and judgments (detailed in Exodus 20:22 through chapter 23). God instructed Moses to write these statutes and judgments in a book called the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 24:4,Exodus 24:7). These additional laws thus became a part of the covenant God made with Israel.

8. Did the Israelites formally agree before God that they would obey all the laws of His covenant? Exodus 24:4,Exodus 24:7.

9. Was the covenant then ratified, or sealed—made binding—with blood? Exodus 24:6-8.

COMMENT: Once a covenant is signed, sealed or ratified—confirmed—it cannot be added to (Galatians 3:15). Anything appearing "beneath the signature," so to speak, is not legally any part of the covenant. Notice the words "the covenant, which the Lord bath made with you" (Exodus 24:8). It was then already made—completed! This is very important to note as we will see later.

If the Israelites would keep the law in the letter, God would keep His part of the covenant. He would fulfill all the material promises of this material covenant (Leviticus 26:3-13;Deuteronomy 28:1-14). A Marriage Covenant When the Word (John 1:1-3), who later became the human Jesus

Christ (John 1:14), made the first man and woman, He established the marriage relationship (Genesis 2:21-25). Centuries later, this same divine Personage entered into a "marriage" relationship with the nation of Israel! Few understand this important fact.

1. When and how did the One who later became Jesus Christ become Israel’s husband? Jeremiah 31:31-32;Ezekiel 16:8.Also notice in Exodus 19:8Exodus 24:7 the "I do" agreement made by the "wife"—Israel—to her "Husband," Yahweh, the LORD—the One who became Christ.

COMMENT: The covenant made at Mt. Sinai was typical of a marriage contract between a man and woman. It was, symbolically speaking, a "marriage" agreement between the Word (Christ) and the nation of Israel. As the Lord who dealt with Old Testament Israel, Christ—the Husband-promised to materially provide for and protect the nation or congregation of Israel. The nation, as the wife, in turn agreed to remain faithful to Him—to refrain from any adulterous or whorish relations with the "gods" of other nations (Exodus 34:12-17). Israel, as a nation, accepted the role of a wife, to obey her Husband.

2. What were the blessings Israel’s Husband would provide His wife if she would live by the laws she agreed to keep? Review Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14.COMMENT: Recall that in Lesson 16 we covered the great material blessings the children of Israel would receive if they obeyed God’s laws. We also saw what curses would result if they disobeyed (Leviticus 26:14-39;Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

Based on God’s Eternal Law

God’s eternal, spiritual law existed long before Adam and Eve were created. Recall that immediately after the creation of the first human beings, God taught them His commandments. But our first parents quickly disobeyed their Creator and cut themselves and their descendants off from access to God’s Holy Spirit. The biblical record shows that God’s law was known by only a special few in ancient times. Those whom the Eternal individually called to perform a special work in His service—the patriarchs and prophets of old—knew and kept God’s Ten Commandments, statutes and other laws. It is important that we fully understand this fact as we proceed in our study of the Old and New Covenants in the Bible.

1. As we learned in Lesson 16, the patriarch Abraham was called by God for a special purpose. God made a covenant with Abraham and revealed to him a special understanding of His eternal, spiritual law. Are we clearly told that Abraham obeyed God’s commandments and laws? Genesis 26:5.What else did he obey? Same verse.

COMMENT: Abraham knew about and kept the Ten Commandments. He also kept God’s statutes and laws. What were these statutes and laws?

These statutes are expressions of the Great Lawmaker, usually commanding or forbidding certain matters of lesser significance than the ten great commandments. Thus the statutes and other laws of God actually magnify, or reveal specific applications of, the Ten Commandments.

Along with the statutes, God also gave the patriarchs His judgments for the protection of everyone’s legal rights. The judgments are binding decisions based on God’s previously revealed law. These decisions are used to settle similar future disputes and to render a sentence or verdict.

2. What other examples clearly illustrate that God revealed to the people of Israel laws which were already in force? Exodus 16:28;Exodus 18:16.

COMMENT: Israel could not refuse to obey laws that did not exist! Both these instances occurred before the nation reached Mt. Sinai—before the covenant was made through Moses.

Thus the Bible shows that the commandments, statutes and judgments—all based on the principles of love toward God and love toward man—were in force prior to the establishment of God’s covenant with the nation Israel!

Then why did God have to reveal His law to the children of Israel when establishing His covenant with them?

Simply because the people had strayed so far from the truth by the time of Moses, that God had to reveal His laws and statutes anew to the Israelites. Ancient Israel had lost much, if not most, of the knowledge of God’s ways while in Egyptian bondage. Since the Ten Commandments were already in force, the only thing new about them at Mt. Sinai was the written, codified form in which God presented them to the people after stating them with His own voice. The civil statutes and judgments were also revealed to Israel to show how the Ten Commandments should be applied to the physical nation. (Recall that these civil laws were written in the "Book of the Covenant"—Exodus 24:3-4,Exodus 24:7) In general, the Ten Commandments apply to individual conduct, the statutes to national or church affairs, and the judgments to legal decisions rendered according to the principles of the Ten Commandments and the statutes.

Let’s notice an example of how the statutes amplify the Ten Commandments.

3. What is the First Commandment? Exodus 20:3.What statute magnifies this command or describes one aspect of how to keep it? Exodus 23:14.

COMMENT: The First Commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The statutes regarding annual festivals magnify the First Commandment—explain how, in a positive way, to ensure that one worships the one true God: "Three times [in the year] thou shalt keep a feast unto me..." (Exodus 23:14). Those who obey this statute keep in special contact with the Creator God and in the knowledge of His great plan for mankind.

Many additional laws—such as Exodus 22:16,Exodus 22:19, for example—specify in greater detail how the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is to be applied. So not only are the statutes based on the Ten Commandments, they spell out in detail how to keep God’s spiritual law as codified in the Ten Commandments. An important point to remember in what we have just studied is this: since God’s Ten Commandments, statutes and judgments existed before the covenant was made with Israel, they were not abolished in A.D. 31 at the crucificion of Jesus Christ. The cessation of the need of a covenant now made old could not render null and void what that first covenant did not bring into force! God’s Commandments are eternal! (Psalms 111:7-8.) Sacrificial Laws Added Later When God brought Israel to Mt. Sinai, He gave the Ten Commandments to them. He allowed Moses to declare to Israel the statutes and judgments because the people didn’t want to hear them personally delivered by God (Exodus chapters 20-24). These statutes and judgments, as we have just seen, magnify the Ten Commandments. But when did the physical ceremonies and sacrifices begin? When did they cease to have force

and effect? And how can we distinguish them from statutes and laws of the Old Covenant?

1. Notice that there is only one sacrifice mentioned in the Book of the Covenant. What is it? Exodus 23:18.

COMMENT: God called it "MY sacrifice." The Passover was instituted in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-14), weeks before Sinai. It was repeated in the covenant made at Sinai, but it was not instituted by that covenant! (Remember, a covenant is an agreement between two parties that may involve previously existing matters.)

2. When God spoke the terms of His covenant to the Israelites after they were brought out of Egypt, did He also give instructions for a sacrificial system of laws? Jeremiah 7:22-23.

COMMENT: God did not originally command sacrifices to be offered. This explains why the temporary sacrifices—instituted after the first covenant was made and ratified at Sinai—were NOT perpetuated by different symbols in the New Testament Church. Only the Passover is continued—with the different New Testament SYMBOLS of unleavened bread and wine. Why is the Passover continued today? Because it began before the covenant was made at Sinai! The very fact that Jesus substituted unleavened bread and wine for the Passover lamb only, and not for the Levitical offerings, is a PROOF that the ceremonial offerings were temporary and not binding today. But the Passover, in its New Testament form, is binding! Now notice further proof of these facts.

3. When and why did God command the Israelites to perform physical ceremonies and sacrifices? Galatians 3:19.

COMMENT: Paul explains that the temporary rituals and sacrifices were afterward "added because of transgressions"—because God’s spiritual law was being broken by the Israelites. When God made His covenant with ancient Israel, He wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone. At that time He also had Moses write His civil statutes and judgments in a book. But this book did not, at first, contain the laws of burnt offerings, sacrifices and washings. God had these added later—within a year—as a separate part of the civil statutes because the Israelites had transgressed His laws. The keeping of these ritualistic laws required much laborious work, as can be seen by the first seven chapters of Leviticus. That is why it came to be known as the "works of the law" in New Testament times (Galatians 2:16).

4. How long was this additional law to last? Galatians 3:19.Notice the words "till the seed [Christ] should come." What was the purpose of this law of "works"? Galatians 3:24; Hebrews 10:1-12.

COMMENT: These physical laws foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ and were a "reminder of sin" to teach the people the need of the Messiah—the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7)--who would pay the penalty of human transgression for all mankind (Hebrews 10:1-39), at which time these sacrificial laws would cease.

Notice that these temporary ritualistic laws did not define sin. They were "reminders" of sin. God’s spiritual laws define sin. The laws which explain what sin is are the ones we are to keep in the spirit as well as the letter today. The principle of voluntary offering of sacrifices existed, of course, before Moses. From the beginning Christ volunteered to offer Himself to pay for the sins of mankind (Revelation 13:8). Cain and Abel made voluntary offerings to God (Genesis 4:3-4). But in

the period from Moses to Christ the practice of giving offerings was commanded, made ritualistic and regulated in great detail.

Why?

Simply because, as we learned in Lesson 16, the children of Israel were a physical, carnal people without the Holy Spirit. They could not offer themselves in spiritual obedience to God (Deuteronomy 29:4), so God gave them ritualistic washings to perform and had them offer animals and other physical types as substitutes. They needed to be reminded of Jesus' then-future sacrifice and of the Holy Spirit, pictured by the various washings, which cleanses us from sin.

These laws had no further use when the Lamb of God died for the sins of the world, and when the Holy Spirit became available for those God would call. But note that the ritualistic laws did not cease because they were part of the Old Covenant. They were added after the covenant or marriage agreement between Christ and Israel was ratified (Exodus 24:1-18). These laws ceased to be necessary only because the true sacrifice for sin—Christ—had been offered!

Israel Breaks the Agreement

1. Recall that the covenant made at Sinai was a marriage agreement between ancient Israel and the member of the God family who became Jesus Christ. Did Israel break that marriage contract? Jeremiah 3:6-7;Jeremiah 11:10.

COMMENT: Ancient Israel became two nations—the House of Israel in the north and the House of Judah in the south. The House of Israel was not faithful to her part of the marriage agreement. The people turned from worshipping God and followed the customs of the heathen, serving their false gods. They broke their part of the marriage covenant by committing spiritual "adultery."

2. Since God is holy, He does not "co-exist" with sin. Was He therefore forced to separate from His "wife"? Isaiah 59:1-2.Did Christ "divorce" the House of Israel? Jeremiah 3:8;Isaiah 50:1.

COMMENT: The relationship became so bad that the Eternal was finally forced into divorcing His own people—the ten northern tribes of the House of Israel. It was the House of Israel's grievous sins that separated her from God. God punished the nation by sending the people out of Palestine into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:6-19).

God did not, however, send the House of Judah permanently away—though they went into temporary captivity to Babylon for their sins (2 Chronicles 36:14-21). Many in Judah repented, after separation from God, and returned to the land under the terms of the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. But Judah became a self-righteous nation, as illustrated by the Pharisees of Jesus' day. The Word, the One who became Jesus Christ, had drawn up terms for a new marriage agreement. Later, the human Jesus Christ, Judah's Husband, died and the last remnant of the marriage established at Mt. Sinai ended. His death freed Him from His marriage contract. Christ, the Lord or Yahweh of the Old Testament era—God in the flesh—had died! Now He is free to enter into a new marriage agreement with a repentant, forgiven, sin-free "spiritual Israel"—the New Testament Church which will be born of God when He returns!

We'll learn more about this shortly. But first, let's understand exactly why a New Covenant is necessary. A NEW Marriage Covenant Proposed

1. Did the Word promise that He would make a NEW covenant—a new marriage agreement—with Israel and Judah even before Old Covenant Judah had gone into captivity for disobeying His law? Jeremiah 31:31.

2. In speaking of Christ's spiritual office of High Priest today, did Paul plainly state that Christ was to establish a New Covenant with His people? Hebrews 8:6-8.

3. Does the reason that a New Covenant must be made lie in the fact that there was a fault with the Old Covenant? Hebrews 8:7. Was the fault with the law? Psalms 19:7;Romans 7:12.

4. Since the fault was not with the law, which is "perfect," nor with God who was able to keep His part of the covenant, who was at fault? Hebrews 8:8.Notice especially the first five and last ten words. What, specifically, was that fault? Deuteronomy 5:29.COMMENT: The weakness of the Old Covenant was not in the laws, but in the people with whom it was made. Why? It was not possible for them to be faithful to the righteous conditions God prescribed in His covenant because there was no promise of receiving the Holy Spirit which would have enabled them to obey! Since Israel did not have a God-fearing nature within them, they did not keep their part of the marriage agreement. This condition will be changed when the New Covenant is made.

God, of course, knew ancient Israel would break the covenant He made with them. He wanted to teach mankind valuable lessons through Israel's examples of flagrant disobedience!

5. Under the terms of the New Covenant, what does God propose to do? Hebrews 8:9-10;Jeremiah 31:33.By what power are those laws written? 2 Corinthians 3:3.

COMMENT: Under the first marriage covenant made at Sinai, God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone. The people could see the law with their eyes, but the law was not within their hearts and minds. The law was not a part of them. But under the terms of the New Covenant, Christ has promised that He will make a marriage agreement ONLY with those who have had the principles of His law indelibly written in their hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit! The New Covenant will not be made with fleshly, carnal Israelites who can still sin—it will correct that fault. This time it will be made with Spirit-born Israelites who have been forgiven their sins and who have God's laws written in their minds and hearts so they can't sin and break the covenant. The apostle John reveals that it is only at the resurrection when we are "born again"—composed of spirit—that we won't be able to sin because we will have God's holy, righteous nature—His divine character--permanently implanted in us (1 John 3:9;2 Peter 1:4). The New Covenant will not be made with Gentiles as many people falsely assume. The covenants and the promises pertain to Israel (Romans 9:4). So what about the Gentiles? Will they be totally left out?

6. Do Gentiles now have any hope of ever being partakers of the promises God made to Abraham, as well as the promises of the New Covenant? Ephesians 2:11-13,Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 3:29;Romans 11:11-25.

COMMENT: In Lesson 16 we learned the details of how men and women of all races, nationalities and languages on earth, through Christ, can enter into the New Covenant relationship with Him—by becoming "spiritual Israelites"! Through Christ, who died to set in motion His irrevocable will or testament, it is possible for people of all nations to become heirs "according to the promise" God made to Abraham and eventually to enter into the New Covenant marriage.

Terms of the New Covenant A prevalent teaching within professing Christianity today claims that the fault with the Old Covenant was God's law—that as the Old had law, the New abolishes the Ten Commandments and is based wholly on PROMISES. Let's understand just how false this teaching really is!

1. Is the "Lord" (Christ) the Messenger of the New Covenant? Malachi 3:1,last part. What message did Christ preach during His ministry? Mark 1:14.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ was prophesied to come as the Messenger of the New Covenant. And the terms of the New Covenant are part of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God He preached!

Just as Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant made at Mt. Sinai, so Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant. And just as His marriage with Israel at Mt. Sinai set up the physical kingdom of Israel, so the marriage of the Church to Christ will set up the spiritual Kingdom of God. Thus the good news of that coming marriage actually is the Gospel Jesus preached—the coming Kingdom of God!

2. Are repentance and belief in the Gospel part of the terms of the New Covenant? Mark 1:15.Did Christ later instruct His disciples to teach the terms of the New Covenant to all the world? Matthew 28:19-20.

COMMENT: The Gospel of the Kingdom of God contains the terms and conditions for entering into the New Covenant agreement with Jesus Christ. And Jesus' teachings to His disciples explain the terms of the New Covenant. But exactly what are the rest of the terms we must strive to abide by to enter into the new marriage covenant with Christ?

3. Is obedience to the Ten Commandments a requirement of the New Covenant? Matthew 19:17-19.

COMMENT: Keeping God s spiritual law as defined in the Ten Commandments is one of the conditions of the New Covenant.

4. There are those who claim Jesus came to do away with all the laws of God, including the statutes and judgments which were part of the terms of the first covenant. What does Christ say about this? Matthew 5:17-20.

COMMENT: In the days of Jesus ministry, the writings we now call "the Old Testament" were not called that. Those writings were then called "the Law, and the Prophets, and the Writings." So Jesus plainly said He did not come to destroy, or do away with the laws of God contained in those Scriptures, but to "fulfill"—OBEY—them!

God's Church, says Paul, is built on the very FOUNDATION of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Much of the doctrine and teaching of God's New Testament Church comes from the prophets whose writings are recorded in what we call Old Testament Scriptures!

5. Was Jesus prophesied to magnify the law? Isaiah 42:21.

COMMENT: Just as the Old Covenant statutes and judgments magnified the Ten Commandments, so Christ amplified the Ten Commandments in the New Covenant to include

obedience to them in their spiritual intent. Notice now the full intent of the law which Spirit-begotten, "spiritual Israelites" should be striving to obey today.

6. Did Christ show it was not enough to keep God’s law in the letter, but that it must now be kept in its full spiritual intent as well? Matthew 5:21-22,Matthew 5:27-28.

COMMENT: Under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant, we are to keep God’s Ten Commandments in their full spiritual intent. Not only are we to refrain from committing the physical acts of adultery and murder (the letter of the law), we are also to avoid committing them in our thoughts!

7. Did Christ also magnify, or spell out the spiritual intent, of certain statutes and judgments? Matthew 5:38-42. What is the intended purpose of keeping the laws of God according to their spiritual intent? Matthew 5:48. ("Be ye" is more correctly translated "Become ye.")

COMMENT: Remember that Jesus was giving instructions, not for a civil government such as ancient Israel’s, but for a spiritual CHURCH. In Matthew 5:38-42, Christ quoted from the Old Covenant—from Exodus 21:24.He revealed that a true Christian should be willing, if necessary, to suffer wrong done to him (see also 1 Peter 2:19-20;Romans 13:1-7). Jesus was magnifying, for the New Testament Church, the APPLICATION of the civil laws given to ancient Israel—not abolishing them, but magnifying them and making them more honorable (Isaiah 42:21).

He raised them from narrow, national laws—given to a carnal nation to be administered according to the strict letter—to a spiritual plane regulating, ultimately, the whole of human society. Six times Jesus said:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time... But I say unto you...." And then He proceeded to expound the spiritual principles underlying the civil laws given to ancient Israel.

8. As we learned earlier in this lesson, the sacrificial laws of ancient Israel pointed to the supreme sacrifice of Christ. Since His sacrifice has occurred, are there any "sacrifices" to be offered today? 1 Peter 2:5;Romans 12:1.

COMMENT: To offer animal sacrifices as reminders of sins already paid for by Jesus, who gave His life in full payment for all sins that mankind would ever commit, became needless after He died in A.D. 31. However, today Christians are to offer spiritual sacrifices. It is a spiritual principle to offer one’s self in living obedience—to "sacrifice" the self—to God.

Preparation of the Prospective Bride The Old Covenant was made with a people upon their promise to obey. They disobeyed. The New Covenant shall be made only with a Spirit-born Church—a people who, during their mortal lives, will have been begotten by God’s Spirit and already PROVED their willingness to obey God! The Old was made with sinning mortals. The New will be made with righteous immortals. It is very important that we understand!

1. Are we plainly told in the Scriptures that Spirit-begotten Christians are to "marry" Jesus Christ? Romans 7:4.Is the Church now engaged, or betrothed, to Christ? 2 Corinthians 11:2.But before Christ marries His Church, what does He intend to do with her? Read Ephesians 5:22-32.Notice especially verses 26-27. COMMENT: The one and only true Church of God is now the affianced Bride of Christ—destined to marry Christ, after being made spirit at the resurrection, which will

occur at His coming. Jesus Christ and the Church will be bound together in marriage for ETERNITY by the terms and conditions of the New Covenant! But before Christ marries the Church, He intends to "cleanse" it from sin by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:26). Finally, at the resurrection, when born of the Spirit of God, she will be truly "spotless"—free from a sinning nature, now possessing the holy, sinless nature of the God family (2 Peter 1:4;1 John 3:9), capable of perfect obedience to Christ for eternity. It is then that Christ Will MARRY His perfectly obedient Church.

2. Why is the New Covenant called a "better covenant"? Hebrews 8:6.Notice especially the last four words. Is the Holy Spirit one of the better promises? Hebrews 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:3.

COMMENT: Recall that the Old Covenant was based on the birthright promise God had made to Abraham. It was made with only one nation—Israel. It promised only temporary material, earthly blessings. The Old Covenant Israelites had no promise of receiving the Holy Spirit then, which could have begun to write God's laws in their hearts and minds. But we can as God calls and begets us with His Holy Spirit!

Even though the New Covenant has not yet been made—that is, in contract language, "signed, sealed and delivered"—those whom God calls are privileged to begin having God's law written in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. They can now have the life-begetting, sin-overcoming Spirit of God to open their minds to spiritual understanding and guide them in living God's way. God's Spirit can be within to empower them to overcome Satan and do the Work of God's Church!

3. How does one receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38.Does he or she then become a member of the body, or Church, of Christ? 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.What are Spirit-begotten Christians to do once they become a part of God's Church—the future wife of Christ? 2 Peter 3:18;Revelation 21:7;Matthew 24:13.

COMMENT: Having God's Spirit dwelling within us is not enough. We must use it to begin growing in the knowledge and spiritual understanding of God's Word, increasing in the attributes of God's spiritual character (Galatians 5:22-23). We must also overcome the devil's attitudes which he broadcasts to our minds (Ephesians 2:2). And we must endure until death or the return of Christ.

These are the prior requirements for entering into the New Covenant marriage relationship with Christ at the soon-coming resurrection. It is then that Abraham's spiritual seed—heirs through Christ—will inherit all the other marvelous things promised in the New Covenant—eternal life, sonship in the Kingdom of God, rulership over the nations with Christ, and the earth as an everlasting possession.

Those God has called to enter into the New Covenant marriage with Christ at His soon return, are now preparing to become the wife of Christ. Others in past ages who were called, chosen and faithful to God's way until death, have already been prepared by God. They are awaiting the resurrection from the dead when they, too, will enter into the New Covenant marriage with Christ along with those who will still be alive at Christ's coming.

After His return, Christ will continue to propose the New Covenant with humans who are born during the Millennium, as well as with those who are resurrected during the Great White Throne judgment period after the Millennium. It is during the latter period when all of ancient Israel will be

given their opportunity to enter into the New Covenant with Christ.

4. How is the glorious marriage of Christ, the "Lamb," described in Revelation 19:6-9?Will Christ's Church be ready to marry Him at His return? Revelation 19:7. Will she indeed be purified and sinless then? Verse 8. Is it clearly the resurrected saints who will marry Christ? Same verse.

COMMENT: At the time of the first resurrection, when Christ comes in supreme power and glory, He will marry a repentant, forgiven, sin-free "spiritual Israel"—the New Testament Church born into the Kingdom of God! The New Covenant will then have been made with them. The time of this wedding is very soon indeed! As John wrote, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). Will YOU be among them?

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The Ten Commandments A. first came into existence when God made His covenant with ancient Israel. B. reflect God's harsh character. C. reflect God's loving nature, describing His righteous character. D. are grievous to keep.

2. Since God's character will never change (Malachi 3:6;Hebrews 13:8), A. there never was a need for any law. B. just having "love" fulfills His Law. C. His Law was only temporary—from Moses to Christ. D. His spiritual Law will never change or be done away.

3. Disobedience to the Ten Commandments A. has never hurt anyone except the ancient Israelites. B. is overlooked by God if done in love. C. has produced discord, unhappiness, suffering and death. D. is no longer possible since God's Law has been done away.

4. Because Lucifer and one-third of the angels sinned, we know A. God's Law is too hard to keep. B. a law must have already existed for them to transgress. C. there must be something wrong with God's Law. D. None of the above.

5. A testament is A. the same as a covenant, from the point of view of the Bible. B. a mutual agreement to do or to refrain from doing some act. C. an agreement between two parties promising rewards in return for stipulated performance. D. an act or document by which a person bequeaths or wills certain of his possessions to another upon his death.

6. A covenant A. goes into effect when one of the parties dies. B. is a contract or agreement by which one party promises certain rewards or payments in return for certain stipulated performance by the other party. C. is not a binding agreement. D. is not similar to a contract.

7. The covenant God made with ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai imposed upon the people certain terms and conditions. They were to A. obey God's Ten Commandments, statutes and judgments. B.

obey only the Ten Commandments. C. do what was right in their own eyes. D. obey strict and harsh rules and rituals, including the sacrificing of animals.

8. If Israel kept its part of the covenant, God agreed, as His part of that agreement, to A. give the Israelites His Holy Spirit. B. bless the Israelites materially. C. do away with His Law. D. bless enemy nations with birthright promises.

9. Once a covenant is signed or ratified, A. either party can change the terms of the agreement. B. neither party can break it. C. nothing at all can be added to or deleted from it. D. it becomes null and void.

10. At Mt. Sinai, the member of the God Family who later became Jesus Christ entered into A. a symbolic "marriage" relationship with the nation of Israel. B. an agreement with Israel that was not like a husband/wife relationship. C. a parent/child relationship with Israel. D. an agreement that promised spiritual salvation to the Israelites.

11. The Ten Commandments, statutes and judgments A. are all based on the principle of love toward God and love toward man. B. were obeyed by Abraham hundreds of years before Moses. C. were in force before God's marriage covenant was made with Israel. D. All of the above.

12. Since God's Ten Commandments, His statutes and laws existed before the Sinaitic covenant with Israel, A. they are out of date now and no longer very practical. B. the cessation of that covenant made these laws null and void. C. they were not abolished when that covenant ceased at Jesus' death. D. that covenant made them binding on the Israelites for the first time.

13. When did God institute the physical rituals and sacrifices? A. After His covenant with Israel had been transgressed. B. When the covenant was made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. C. When He created Adam. D. The Bible is not clear on this point.

14. The Passover sacrifice A. was instituted by Moses after God made His covenant with Israel at Sinai. B. was instituted by the Old Covenant and has since ceased to be observed. C. began before the Mt. Sinai covenant, and is now observed with New Testament symbols established by Jesus Christ. D. is observed by true Christians today in its original form.

15. Why did God command ancient Israel to perform physical ceremonies and sacrifices? A. Because He wanted to impose hard-to-bear burdens on sinning Israelites. B. So they could he credited with good works, even though they continued to sin. C. To provide a way for sinning Israelites to atone or pay for their spiritual sins. D. Because these duties would remind them of their sins and their need for the promised Messiah.

16. God gave the Israrlites ritualistic washings to perform A. because the desert is a dirty place to live. B. as a substitute for, or a symbolic type of the Holy Spirit. C. so they could earn salvation. D. to picture Christ's death for sin.

17. The sacrifices and rituals God added after the covenant had been made at Mt. Sinni A. ceased to be required after Christ's death because He had been offered as the true sacrifice for sin. B. never had any significance. C. were never required to be performed . D. are still required of ancient Israel's modern-day descendants.

18. The "marriage" covenant that began at Mt. Sinai formally ended when A. both parties to the marriage lost interest and agreed to end their covenant. B. the prospects for a new and better spiritual marriage led to the breakup of the first marriage. C. Jesus Christ, the "husband" in the marriage covenant, died. D. Israel disobeyed God’s Law.

19. According to Hebrews 8:7,what was the "fault" with the Old Covenant? A. The people, who were disobedient because they did not have the Holy Spirit. B. God, who had made an impossibly difficult agreement. C. God’s Law. D. The sacrifices, which could never make a man righteous.

20. Under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant, the Ten Commandments A. are replaced by love. B. are to he kept in their spiritual intent as well as in the letter of the Law. C. are replaced by spiritual promises. D. were kept by Christ in our stead, so we do not need to keep them.

21. Which one of the following is FALSE? A. At Mt. Sinai, the people promised to obey God without realizing they couldn’t. B. The New Covenant will be made with Spirit-born individuals who have already proved their willingness to obey God. C. The New Covenant is based on spiritual promises. D. The Holy Spirit was one of the promises of the Old Covenant.

22. The terms and conditions of the New Covenant A. will bind Jesus Christ and His Spirit-born Church together in marriage for eternity. B. are not relevant to Spirit-begotten Christians because the New Covenant has not yet been made. C. are identical with the Old Covenant. D. do not require Christians to do anything.

23. Christ will make the New Covenant with His Church and marry the Church A. after He cleanses it from sin. B. at the resurrection, when Spirit-begotten Christians are born of God. C. after it has become sinless, capable of perfect obedience to Christ for eternity. D. All of the above.

24. The New Covenant is better than the Old because the New A. does away with God’s Law. B. is based on spiritual promises. C. is only temporary. D. is already in force.

25. Which one of the following statements about the New Covenant is NOT true? A. It has not yet been formally made, but those God calls into His Church are privileged to begin having God’s Law written in their hearts now by the Holy Spirit. B. It will be formally made with Spirit-begotten Christians who will have been born of God at Christ’s return. C. It will continue to be proposed to mortals during and after the Millennium. D. It will be made only with mortal members of God’s Church who are still alive at Christ’s return.

Lesson 18

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 18 What is the True Gospel?

Jesus Christ came to earth almost 2000 years ago to announce a message from God. He was killed for bringing it! What was that message? JUST believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved," is the message of most professing Christian ministers today. But is that what the true gospel really is? Almost nobody seems to know!

What the Gospel Is Not

Tune in a television set any Sunday morning in the United States to so-called "gospel programs" and you'll hear and see preachers telling you about Christ—urging you to believe on Christ—to accept Christ—telling you what a wonderful person He was. They will talk about "getting out the gospel," meaning the message about Christ. Thus every Sunday morning, millions of viewers assume they are hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Believe it or not, preaching Christ and belief on Him is not preaching Christ's gospel!

Christ was a messenger. He brought the gospel—the message God sent by Him, for all mankind. That message is good news. The very word "gospel" means good news.

True, Jesus Christ, the person, is the most important individual ever to walk this earth. True, He is the Savior of all mankind. But Christ, the person, is not the gospel! The miracles He performed are not the gospel. The things Jesus did are not the gospel. What He preached—the tremendous good news He announced—Is the "gospel"!

What people have accepted without question as the gospel offers no solution to humanity's sufferings, frustrations and indescribable evils. The true gospel Jesus brought proclaims the solution to the world's troubles. But men rejected that gospel and crucified Jesus for preaching it!

"Believers" Wanted to Kill Christ!

There were those in Christ's day who "believed on Him," just as millions do today. These same people were influenced on occasion to want to kill Him! Notice the astounding truth in your Bible. It's an eye-opener, for the Bible does not say what most people have been taught.

Jesus was speaking in the Temple at Jerusalem: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Jesus' "word" was His message—the gospel He was teaching. He was saying, in other words: "If you continue doing what the gospel teaches, you will be my disciples." But they refused to believe what He taught—His gospel—and to do what He taught. They believed on Him. They liked Him. They believed in His identity. They believed He was the Messiah, the Christ, but they did not believe HIM—or what He said! They called Him a liar.

Continuing, Jesus said, "...but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father..." (John 8:37-38). These very people who "believed on him" sought to kill Him because they hated what He said—His gospel—the very solution to mankind's troubles that will usher in peace, prosperity and happiness in all the earth!

These who believed on Him continued to argue. Then Christ said: "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God... I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me... And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (John 8:40, John 8:42, John 8:45).

Millions Deceived Today

Millions today also believe on Christ, but do not believe His gospel because most have never heard it! They have heard of Christ—of what He did—but not His message of the solution to all man's troubles and how to receive eternal life in joyful happiness, abundance and accomplishment! So millions today have been deceived into believing a false gospel which does not lead to salvation! Strong words, but backed up by the Word of God, as we shall see. This lesson of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course will show you what the gospel of Jesus Christ really is, why it is so vital for your salvation, exactly when and where it was first preached, and who is preaching it today. So be sure to get your Bible before you read another word. Look up every scripture given in answer to the questions as you study the truth about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We hope you are also taking the time to copy these verses in a notebook. This will not only help you to concentrate on your studies, it will also help to implant the truth of God's Word more firmly in your memory. Writing down the scriptures will also enable you to easily review this study material at any time in the future.

LESSON 18 False Gospels Preached Today In today's professing Christian Western world, we find a variety of "gospels" being preached. Some designate their gospel as "The Gospel of Jesus Christ." Others call their gospel "The Gospel of Salvation." Still others profess "The Gospel of Grace." There is also a modern "Social Gospel," while some call their gospel "The Israel Message."

None of these are the gospel Jesus proclaimed! Why doesn't professing Christianity preach the only true gospel that God sent by Jesus Christ?

1. Did Jesus tell His disciples that prior to His return, many would be deceived by the false teachings of ministers claiming to represent Him and professing that He is the Christ? Matthew 24:4-5.

COMMENT: Untold thousands of professing Christian ministers have, over the centuries, "preached Christ." They have professed to be His ministers— to represent Him. They have said Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. But they have withheld Christ's gospel. Thus the vast majority have been deceived by false gospels!

Remember, a deceived person does not know he is deceived. Otherwise he would not be deceived. Millions have been deceived into accepting a false gospel—a false salvation, believe it or not!

2. Were there already many antichrists in the days of the apostle John (about A.D. 90)? 1 John 2:18.

3. Did the Apostle Paul lament the fact that there were already many false apostles, teaching a counterfeit gospel in his day? Galatians 1:6-8.

COMMENT: About 20 years after Christ's death, Paul pronounced a curse upon anyone who would dare to preach any other gospel than the one true gospel which Jesus preached, and which the apostle Paul continued to preach to the Galatians. Yet, another "gospel" had been preached to the Galatians by false ministers claiming to represent Christ. The true gospel was suppressed not long after Christ completed His ministry. After about A.D. 70 it was no longer proclaimed publicly to the world. The true Church of God was forced by persecution to "go underground," holding services secretly, communicating the truth of God privately.

4. Did Paul repeat the curse that would fall upon anyone who would pervert the true gospel and preach a spurious gospel? Galatians 1:9.

COMMENT: A false gospel continued to be preached publicly until today dozens of different, perverted gospels are being taught as if they were the true gospel. Not knowing anything about the true gospel, the vast majority therefore reject it when they do hear it proclaimed anew today by God's Church!

5. What did Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian Church (written before A.D. 60), warn about those who preached "another Jesus," received "another spirit" and accepted "another gospel"? 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.

COMMENT: The Jesus these false ministers preached about, the spirit they proffered, the "gospel" which they taught, were all spurious—totally foreign to the apostle Paul and the other true apostles of Christ!

Paul, therefore, gave this solemn warning to the Corinthian brethren (and to us today): "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

6. What did Paul say is in store for those who through their wickedness suppress the truth of God? Romans 1:18.(The Revised Standard Version plainly translates "hold the truth" as "suppress the truth.")

COMMENT: Before the end of the first century A.D. the message of the true gospel taught by Christ and His apostles was suppressed and false "gospels" substituted. Christ's message would not be proclaimed worldwide again until the latter half of the twentieth century!

7. Did Jesus Christ say it is necessary to believe the gospel to be saved? Mark 16:15-16.

COMMENT: Notice Jesus said, "He that believeth." But believe what? That which He preached—the gospel! Not a gospel. Not ANY gospel. THE gospel! On the authority of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to believe that precise identical gospel in order to be saved! But in order to

believe the true gospel, we must first come to know what gospel Jesus preached.

Before Jesus Christ began preaching the one and only true gospel nineteen and one-half centuries ago, God first sent a special messenger to prepare the way before Him.

God’s Messengers and Their Messages The prophet Malachi lived among the Jewish colony that had been sent to Jerusalem, out of captivity in the ancient lands of Babylon and Medo-Persia, to build the second temple. Malachi wrote approximately one generation after Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. This is important to know because his writings reached only a small portion of Judah and none of the House of Israel which some refer as the "lost" ten tribes. Yet Malachi’s prophecy is addressed to Israel (Malachi 1:1), not just the minimal Jewish colony in Jerusalem among whom he lived. But His message never reached the House of Israel which long since had been taken into Assyrian captivity and scattered. That’s because Malachi’s message is a prophecy for all of Israel today!

1. Did Malachi prophesy that God would send His "messenger" to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ? Malachi 3:1;Mark 1:3.

COMMENT: This prophecy in Malachi applies to preparing the way for both Jesus’ first coming nearly 2,000 years ago and to preparing the way before His second coming in power and glory as World Ruler. Malachi 3:2-6 of Malachi 3:1-18 definitely refer to His yet-future second coming. (More about this later in the lesson.) In Malachi 3:1, Malachi clearly referred also to Christ’s first coming, because this prophecy is referred to in Mark 1:1-2:"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ... I will send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

2. Who was the messenger sent by God to prepare the way for Christ’s first coming? Luke 1:13-17;Mark 1:4,Mark 1:7-8.

COMMENT: It was prophesied that John would 1) come in the spirit and power of Elijah; 2) turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; and 3) "...make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins to prepare numbers of people to accept Christ when He began His ministry.

3. After John prepared the way for Christ’s first coming, did Jesus then fulfill His prophesied mission as the Messenger of the New Covenant? Malachi 3:1;Mark 1:14-15.

COMMENT: God had promised to send a Messenger into this world from heaven, bearing the message of the New Covenant from Him. Jesus Christ was the Messenger of that New Covenant, as we learned in the previous lesson. And recall that the New Covenant message is the "gospel" Jesus preached!

4. Where did Jesus first preach the gospel? Mark 1:14;Acts 10:36-37.When did Jesus begin preaching the gospel? Same verses.

COMMENT: Galilee is the place where Jesus first preached the gospel, not Jerusalem. And He began preaching "after the baptism which John preached." The true gospel of the New Covenant, then, did not begin with John the Baptist. It began after John had completed his baptismal ministry and was put in prison.

5. To whom did God send Jesus to preach the gospel? Matthew 15:24.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ was the divine Messenger sent by God to preach to the descendants of ancient Israel. Since Malachi called Him the Messenger of the Covenant (Malachi 3:1), His message is the proclamation of the New Covenant. This message is the New Testament gospel!

6. Did God later send the apostle Peter to preach the same gospel to Gentiles? Acts 10:34-48 (especially notice Acts 10:36-37);Acts 11:18.

COMMENT: The same gospel Christ preached to the children of Israel now began to go to all nations. But the gospel did not originate with Jesus Christ, nor with Peter, nor the apostle Paul. It was sent from God the Father by Jesus Christ! The "Gospel of the Kingdom of God"

1. What was the "gospel" Jesus preached? Mark 1:14.

COMMENT: The message God sent by Jesus Christ was the "Gospel of the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God is the government of God which shall rule all nations. But also it is the family of God into which we may be born—the divine family which will become a spirit-nation, ruling all nations on earth as a world-ruling government!

Jesus was sent merely to announce that message—not force men to accept it, believe it, and act upon it. Never did Jesus plead with a single one to be converted. He just announced the good news of the Kingdom of God, and then left it to the Father to call, through that announcement and His Spirit, those whom He would select (John 6:44). Christ did not come then to convert the world! He did not start a "soul-saving" crusade. He came to announce the gospel—the good news—of His coming Kingdom on earth!

2. Nevertheless, did Jesus say it was necessary to repent and believe the gospel He preached? Mark 1:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice Jesus said, "Believe the gospel." What gospel? The one He was proclaiming. Jesus said we must believe the gospel—the good news of the coming Kingdom of God—to become a Christian! It was then and is today an advance news announcement. It is tremendous, wonderful news—the most important news ever announced to mankind!

But, one may ask, don’t we need to believe on Jesus? Of course. Other scriptures teach that. But at this particular time Jesus said we must believe Him—believe what He said—believe the gospel message of the Kingdom of God which He proclaimed! The gospel of Jesus Christ is not man’s gospel about the person of Christ. It is Christ’s gospel—the gospel Jesus preached—the gospel God sent by Him, and therefore it is also called, in Scripture, "The Gospel of God." The gospel of God is God’s gospel—His message—His good news which He sent by Jesus.

3. Whom did Jesus plainly say sent Him and told Him what to say? John 12:49-50.

COMMENT: The Father sent Jesus bearing a special message, which is the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is God’s Spokesman—the Word that was made flesh and lived, and taught, on this earth!

4. Did Jesus restate for emphasis that the word which He spoke was NOT His, but the Father’s? John 14:24.

5. What did Jesus say is the gospel of the New Testament? Luke 16:16.

COMMENT: "The law and the prophets"—referring to Old Testament Scriptures—were preached until John the Baptist began his special ministry. After John's mission was over, Jesus began proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Christ's gospel is the prophetic proclamation of the coming world government to rule all nations and bring today's confused, chaotic, war-weary earth peace, and joy! It is the vital, dynamic, powerful, living message of God's government, first over individuals in God's Church who have voluntarily come under that government, then later over all nations in the World Tomorrow! Of course the message from God includes the knowledge about our Savior, High Priest and coming King! Of course it includes the true way of salvation, which the churches of this world do not understand! It also includes knowledge of the location of the territory to be ruled over by the King of the coming Kingdom of God—the fact it will be on this earth, NOT in heaven! But there can be no government without laws, and so the true gospel also must proclaim the law of God, which will bring peace and everything good to those living in the World Tomorrow, and success, happiness and joy to the individual who keeps God's law now. The true gospel has to do with the nations of today's world, world conditions today, and Christ's reign over all nations in the World Tomorrow! It is a "full," complete, dynamic and powerful gospel which has been kept from the world for nineteen centuries by the god of this world— Satan the devil! (Revelation 12:9.) Let's be sure we understand the full meaning of the Kingdom of God.

What the Kingdom of God Really IS The Bible speaks of successive world-ruling kingdoms. The first was the Chaldean Empire (often called "Babylon"). God inspired the prophet Daniel to say to Nebuchadnezzar, its king, "...the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (Daniel 2:37).

There also were other kingdoms in the course of history occupying lesser territories. One was the Kingdom of Israel—the family of the patriarch Israel grown into a nation and later ruled by kings. The Kingdom of Israel was actually a type or forerunner of the coming Kingdom of God which will be composed of Spirit-born children of God—the family of God organized into a governing kingdom. The Kingdom of God will be dual:

1) A KINGDOM. As a kingdom it will be composed of four things: a) a king ruling over b) subjects within c) a definite territory with d) laws and an organized system of administering them.

2) A FAMILY. The family of God into which humans may be born is a governing or ruling family. It will have jurisdiction over all nations of the earth! The prophet Daniel, who lived nearly 600 years before Christ, knew that the Kingdom of God was to be an actual government ruling over literal people on the earth because God revealed this knowledge to him.

Daniel was one of four extraordinarily intelligent and brilliant Jewish lads in the Judean captivity. These four young men were stationed in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldean Empire, and were in training for special responsibilities in the Babylonian government.

1. Did God give Daniel special understanding in visions and dreams? Daniel 1:17.

COMMENT: King Nebuchadnezzar was the first world ruler. He had conquered much of the known world, including the kingdom of Judah. This lofty king had a dream so impressive it troubled him,

moving him to have tremendous concern (Daniel 2:1). He demanded that his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers tell him both what he had dreamed and what it meant. Of course they could not. They were baffled. Then Daniel was brought before the king.

2. Even though Daniel disclaimed any more human ability to interpret dreams than the Chaldean magicians, whom did he tell Nebuchadnezzar reveals secrets and would make known to the king what would come to pass in the latter days? Daniel 2:28-30.

COMMENT: Through this dream God was revealing to this world-ruling human king that there is a God in heaven—that God is Supreme Ruler over all nations, governments and kings—that God rules the universe! Although during the past 6,000 years God has left the nations generally to their own devices, God was giving Nebuchadnezzar a special opportunity to accept His rule. The main purpose of this dream, as we shall see, was to reveal God's government—the fact that God rules and the truth of the coming Kingdom of God—the one and only true gospel of Jesus Christ. And, secondly, to reveal—preserved in writing for us today—what is to happen "in the latter days" or end time. This is no dry, dull, dead writing for a people of 2,500 years ago. This is living, tremendous, big news for OUR DAY! It is advance news for us NOW. News, before it happens, of the most colossal event of all earth's history certain to occur in our lifetimes—during the next few years! And it all has to do with the very gospel Christ preached. It is vital that we understand!

3. What did King Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream? Daniel 2:31-33.

COMMENT: Nebuchadnezzar saw a stupendous statue larger than any ever built by man. Its appearance was terrifying! Its head was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, legs of solid iron, feet and toes a mixture of iron and clay.

4. As Nebuchadnezzar viewed this statue in his dream, what smashed the statue on its feet? Verse 34. What happened to the image? Daniel 2:35.

COMMENT: There is a time element involved in this dream. Nebuchadnezzar viewed the statue until a supernatural STONE shot from heaven like a meteor, smashing the statue on its feet! Then the whole of the statue broke into small fragments and was blown away by the wind—it completely disappeared. Then this "stone" expanded miraculously and quickly became a "mountain" so great it filled the whole earth.

Unlike ordinary dreams, this one was caused by God to convey the message of God's sovereignty to Nebuchadnezzar. This message is part of the written Word of God and it reveals to us today important facts about the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's notice the interpretation of the dream as revealed to Daniel by God.

5. Was Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom the first world-ruling empire? Daniel 2:37-38. Who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, power, and glory? Daniel 2:37.

COMMENT: God revealed Himself to this world dictator as the Most High Ruler over all—the Head of a universe—ruling government. The Eternal was revealing Himself through Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, and through the Bible to us today, as the all-powerful Supreme Ruler who is to be obeyed!

6. Was Nebuchadnezzar and his world-ruling kingdom represented by the golden head of the great image? Daniel 2:38.

7. Was a kingdom (pictured by the chest and arms of silver) to arise after Nebuchadnezzar which would be inferior to his kingdom? Daniel 2:39.

8. Was yet a third kingdom (pictured by the belly and thighs of brass) to gain power and rule over all the earth? Same verse.

COMMENT: Notice that these passages are speaking of kingdoms that would bear rule over people on earth. The prophecy is speaking of GOVERNMENTS! It is not speaking of ethereal sentiments "set up in the hearts of men." It is not speaking of churches. It is speaking of governments that bear rule and authority over nations of people here on earth. It is literal. It is specific. There is no misunderstanding here as to what is meant by the word "kingdom."

God revealed through the prophet Daniel that the great metallic image represented a succession of world-ruling governments. First was the head of gold. That represented Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom, the Chaldean Empire. After him was to come a second, then a third kingdom "which shall bear rule over all the earth." The prophecy is referring to world-ruling kingdoms or empires.

9. What do the legs of iron of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream-image represent? Daniel 2:40.

COMMENT: The legs of iron represent a fourth world empire. It was to be exceedingly strong, even as iron is very strong, thus signifying that it was to be stronger militarily than its predecessors. Yet, silver is less valuable than gold, brass less than silver, and iron less than brass. Though each succeeding metal was harder and stronger, the decreasing value of the metals shows the succession would deteriorate morally and spiritually. And the two legs meant the fourth empire would be divided.

After the Chaldean Empire came the still larger Persian Empire, then the Greco-Macedonian Empire and fourth, the Roman Empire. The final empire was divided, with capitals at Rome and Constantinople (now called Instanbul).

10. Will ten kings or kingdoms, represented by the ten toes, be in existence just before the Kingdom of God (the great "stone") is set up? Daniel 2:41-44. What will God’s Kingdom do to these ten kingdoms? Daniel 2:44.

COMMENT: By connecting this prophecy with Daniel 7:1-28 and Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18, we can know it is referring to the soon-coming United States of Europe, which is now forming out of the European Common Market before our very eyes! Revelation 17:12 makes plain that it will be a union of ten kings or kingdoms—ten nations or groups of nations. This will in reality be the final resurrection of the medieval "Holy Roman Empire." (If you don’t already have it, be sure to send for the astounding free booklet Who Is the Beast? which thoroughly explains this fascinating subject.)

After the fall of the ancient Roman Empire in A.D. 476, there were to be seven revivals that would be ruled over by a gentile church called the "daughter" of ancient Babylon (Isaiah 47:1). It is a church claiming to be Christian, but actually named by God "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT"—or, more plainly, BABYLONIAN MYSTERIES (Revelation 17:1-5).

Six of those revivals have come and gone. The seventh is now in the process of emerging. It is to be the final, brief resurrection of the Roman Empire, this time composed of ten European nations or groups of nations. These are the ten toes comprising a mixture of iron and clay (Daniel 2:41-43). At the end of their days, which will last no more than three and one-half years, Christ will return to earth to set up the Kingdom of God with Headquarters in Jerusalem. He is going to set up an eternal Kingdom which shall break in pieces and utterly consume these end-time kingdoms!

11. When Christ comes, will He come as Supreme King to rule the whole earth? Revelation 19:11-16.Whose possession will the nations of this world become? Revelation 11:15.

COMMENT: The plain truth of the Bible reveals that the "Kingdom of God" is to be a literal government composed of spirit rulers who shall rule over all nations on earth. It is to take over the governments of the nations at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Christ will become the "King of kings," and He will rule by the law of God. This is the very good news or "Gospel of the Kingdom of God" which Jesus preached! To Be "Born" Into God’s Kingdom!

Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees occupying an office of authority over the Jews during Jesus’ day, came under the cloak of darkness to see Jesus. He admitted that he and the other religious leaders knew Jesus was a teacher sent from God (John 3:1-2).

Jesus proceeded to reveal to Nicodemus a vital truth we need to understand about the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

1. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus must happen to an individual before he can "see" the Kingdom of God? John 3:3.

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God is something those not born again simply cannot see. Therefore a church on earth could not be the Kingdom of God as some have erroneously assumed, because you can see a church!

2. Must a person be born of the Spirit before he can enter into the Kingdom of God? John 3:5. What will he be composed of when "born again"--born of the Spirit of God? Verse 6. Is God a spirit? John 4:24.

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God is something that can be entered into. But only those who are "born again" can enter into it. We who are born of the flesh are flesh—just mortal flesh and blood. We were born that way. But it is possible for us to be born again—this time not as a mortal, flesh and blood baby, but born of the very Spirit of God. Then we shall be spirit— wholly composed of spirit as God is! As we learned in previous lessons of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course (specifically Lessons 8 and 13), God is not a single Personage. The Hebrew word for God, Elohim, denotes more than one person. It shows God is a single family, or "kingdom," but composed of more than one person. We have the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, and the animal kingdom. The Bible reveals an angel kingdom, created by God and composed of spirit. And then, high above all is the very creating kingdom—the God kingdom. In other words, the "Kingdom of God"! God the Father and Christ the Son presently compose the Kingdom or family of God. The astounding truth of the Bible is that God is reproducing Himself! God created mortal man in God’s own image so that we may become impregnated—begotten—by the Spirit of God. Then, by a resurrection, we may be born of God—"born again"—as immortal,

spirit-composed persons in the Kingdom or family of God! Notice how the apostle Paul explains it.

3. Can a flesh-and-blood person inherit the Kingdom of God? 1 Corinthians 15:50.How, then, can one enter God’s Kingdom, or family? 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God is something no human, born of flesh and blood, can enter or inherit. It is through the resurrection of those begotten by the Spirit of God during this mortal life, that this mortal will put on immortality and, like God, become immortal, incorruptible— literally BORN of God’s Spirit into the very God family! That is how we shall enter into the Kingdom of God.

Those thus born again, which will include all the Spirit-begotten saints of God through the centuries, will be organized into the executive branch of the government of God to rule this earth’s mortals under Jesus Christ! (Daniel 7:27;Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 5:10.) Christ’s Gospel Being Proclaimed Worldwide Today

Recall that John the Baptist was the "messenger" whom Malachi prophesied would come to prepare the way before Christ’s ministry during His first coming to earth (Malachi 3:1;Mark 1:4,Mark 1:7-8; Luke 1:13-17). An angel prophesied that John would go ahead of Christ "in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

1. After John was put in prison and Christ had begun His ministry, did Jesus prophesy that another "Elijah" was yet to come? Matthew 17:10-11.Is it clear that John the Baptist was a type of yet another Elijah? Matthew 17:12-13. Did Malachi also prophesy of another Elijah’s coming? Malachi 4:5.What would this "Elijah" do? Malachi 4:6;Matthew 17:11.

COMMENT: These verses show that John was a type of the future "Elijah"- one who would also be sent by God to the world in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, this time prior to Christ’s coming in great power and glory as World Ruler (Malachi 3:1-6).

Before the day of the Lord, a human messenger would be commissioned by God to prepare a spiritual people for God, and turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and vice versa before the Second Coming of Christ— much the same as John did before Jesus began His ministry.

Jesus also said the Elijah to come would "restore all things" (Matthew 17:11). Restitution is restoring to a former state or condition—restoring something that had been taken away. What former state or condition needs restoring? What was taken away and when?

God’s government was taken away from the earth at Lucifer’s rebellion. But it was not restored at Jesus’ first coming. Christ will restore it when He returns (Acts 3:19-21). And so the heavens have received Jesus until He comes as "King of kings and Lord of lords" to restore the government of God (Revelation 19:16). At that time He shall set up the Kingdom of God—the divine, Spirit-born family of God which shall rule the earth.

Just as Christ shall restore the government of God over the entire earth, the one who was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah would restore it in God’s Church. God’s government has been restored in the one true Church of God! In the process of restoring the government of God in the Church through the modern Elijah, God has used him to restore many related truths. Of primary importance was the restoration of Christ’s true gospel of the Kingdom of God! That gospel was

restored when Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong of the Worldwide Church of God first went on the air with "The World Tomorrow" radio program the first week in January, 1934, and then to the world when he went on Radio Luxembourg and Radio Ceylon in 1953--one century of 19-year time cycles after the gospel of the Kingdom had been suppressed!

Through Mr. Armstrong, in August 1933, Jesus Christ raised up the parent congregation of this present era of the very Church of God in Eugene, Oregon, United States of America, to back His present-day apostle in carrying out God's commission to him to preach the very gospel of Christ. From this very humble, small beginning, God began adding to the Church those He was specially calling to help Mr. Armstrong in this Great Commission. The Church continued to grow until today there are scores of thousands of baptized, Holy Spirit-begotten members in God's Church worldwide! These men and women have been called by God to be the "firstfruits" of His family—to be born of God at the first resurrection. They are now in training to rule all nations with Jesus Christ at His return.

God is also using these thousands of members to support His Work through Mr. Armstrong with their fervent, prevailing prayers, and their tithes and special offerings which are used in financing the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. Still others have been called to assist God's apostle in a more personal and direct way—as trained and chosen ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as other laborers within the very work of the Church worldwide.

God has given each member of His Church his or her part in the WORK of proclaiming Christ's gospel to the world as the very means by which they may grow spiritually so they, too, may enter into the Kingdom of God at Christ's coming.

2. Did Jesus foretell that the gospel of the Kingdom of God would be preached in all the world as a witness in the end time? Matthew 24:14.Would the gospel also be published among all nations? Mark 13:10.Would this then be the "sign" of the end of this age, and Jesus' imminent return? Matthew 24:1-3.

COMMENT: The gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached is now being proclaimed to the nations on "The World Tomorrow" radio broadcast and telecast. It is also being published in The PLAIN TRUTH and GOOD NEWS magazines, dozens of booklets and in THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE!

3. By what power was the Work of God done during the days of God's servant Zerubabbel, who built the physical Temple to which Jesus came? Zechariah 4:6.

COMMENT: In our modern space age, as in Zerubabbel's day, the work of God's Church is ultimately done not by human power, but by the power of the Spirit of God! The Kingdom of God is being preached and published in all the world today by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Many lives are also being changed, converted, begotten of God's Spirit! God is preparing a "first-fruits" harvest for His Kingdom. And this precious harvest is the spiritual "Temple" which is presently being built by God (Ephesians 2:19-22), and to which the spiritual Christ will return (Malachi 3:1).

Churches have been raised up in over 60 nations and God has added members to His Church from over 100 nations! The flock of God is being fed around the world by God's called and chosen ministers, many of whom have been trained at God's own college. Evangelists, pastors and elders

have been ordained by God’s apostle. The sick are being healed and demons are being cast out! The "fruits" of God’s Work which He is doing through His human instruments today are the same fruits that the same Holy Spirit produced through the human Jesus and the collective "Body of Christ" in apostolic days! The Holy Spirit does the work, and the work is exactly the same—the fruits the same as in the days of Zerubabbel, Christ and the apostles!

4. Did Christ say that His servants would do even greater works than He had done while on earth? John 14:12.Even though Christ’s end-time Church would have little strength of its own, what would He fling open for it in order to carry out His Great Commission? Revelation 3:8.

COMMENT: That door was opened by Jesus Christ! Right now, the divine commission to preach and publicize the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness to all nations is being fulfilled in a dramatic way. And it is reaching far more people than Jesus reached while on earth! He was able to preach only to the few that He could reach on foot. With today’s modern technology, one apostle can preach to millions of people via television and radio, the printing press and other means of mass communication, including satellites that orbit the earth! The PLAIN TRUTH magazine is proclaiming Christ’s gospel as a powerful witness to tens of millions. The PLAIN TRUTH is now being sent around the world into over 100 nations! It is being read by kings, presidents, prime ministers, government and religious leaders as well as the average man on the street. The English PLAIN TRUTH is also being translated and published simultaneously in several major languages: Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Norwegian, as is this Bible Correspondence Course. This is a globe-girdling Work! The sun never sets on offices of this worldwide Work of God. The gospel of the Kingdom of God is truly being "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" as Jesus said it would (Matthew 24:14). The "sign" by which we might know the end of this age of human misrule and Jesus’ Second Coming is near is the fulfilling of this prophecy. It is now being fulfilled before your very eyes and ears!

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. Jesus Christ preached A. mostly about Himself. B. about the miracles He performed. C. the Gospel or good news God sent by Him for all mankind. D. the same message most professing Christian ministers preach today.

2. Some of the Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah later wanted to kill Him because A. they did not like what He preached. B. they hated His message. C. He told them the truth. D. All of the above.

3. Why are false gospels widely believed today? A. Because ministers claiming to represent Christ have preached false gospels of their own devisings. B. Because the true Gospel is all bad news.

C. Because people are knowingly deceived. D. Certainly not because the true Gospel was Suppressed before the end of the first century A.D.

4. Which one of the following statements is FALSE? A. Satan transforms himself into an "angel of light." B. Satan's ministers appear as "ministers of righteousness." C. Satan worked through human instruments to suppress Christ's Gospel not long after His ministry. D. The Apostle Paul authorized the preaching of "another Jesus" and "another gospel."

5. Did Jesus say it was necessary to believe the Gospel to be saved? A. Yes, but any gospel that mentions Christ is acceptable. B. Yes, we must believe the one true Gospel Christ and His apostles preached. C. No, all we need to do is believe on Him as our Savior. D. No, He never said that.

6. Malachi prophesied that God would send His "messenger" to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. This prophecy applies A. only to Christ's First Coming as a human being to die for the sins of mankind. B. only to Christ's Second Coming in power and glory, as World Ruler. C. both to His First and Second Coming. D. None of the above.

7. John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's First Coming A. by preaching repentance and baptizing those who repented. B. by denouncing the Kingdom of God. C. by proclaiming the New Covenant message. D. All of the above.

8. The Gospel Jesus preached originated with A. Malachi . B. Peter and the other apostles. C. Christ Himself. D. God, who sent that message of good news to earth by Jesus Christ.

9. Why did Jesus preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God? A. To try to convert the Jews of His day. B. Only to announce that message. C. In an attempt to convert the whole world. D. To establish God's Kingdom in the hearts of men.

10. The Gospel of Jesus Christ A. is the prophetic announcement of the coming government of God to rule all nations on earth. B. foretold the establishment of the Kingdom of God during the Middle Ages. C. has nothing to do with world rule. D. is about self-rule for the modern-day descendants of Israel.

11. The true Gospel includes knowledge about A. Christ as our Savior, High Priest and coming King. B. the true way to salvation. C. the government and Law of God's worldruling Kingdom. D. All of the above. 12. The Kingdom of God will be set up A. in heaven. B. in the hearts of true Christians. C. with a King ruling over all the nations on earth. D. before Christ's return.

13. The rulers in the Kingdom of God will be A. spirit beings who will have been born into the God Family. B. only God the Father and Jesus Christ. C. Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. D. the ten kings of the prophesied end-time united Europe.

14. In Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream, the great metallic statue A. was symbolic of his kingdom only. B. represented a succession of world-ruling governments. C. was symbolic of the glory and power of the coming Kingdom of God. D. was to show what would happen in his day, not our day.

15. The ten toes of the great image represent A. the Ten Commandments. B. the so-called lost ten tribes of Israel. C. a coming union of ten European nations or groups of nations. D. ten major church denominations supporting the Kingdom of God.

16. At the Second Coming of Christ, the Kingdom of God will A. subdue the nations of earth and rule them by the Law of God. B. be set up through various Christian denominations. C. negotiate for peace with the ten European nations. D. All of the above.

17. The Kingdom or Family of God can be entered only by A. those who are begotten and born of God's Spirit. B. those born into God's Family by a resurrection or change to immortality. C. immortal, incorruptible Spirit-born Sons of God. D. All of the above.

18. The messenger God would send to the world before Christ's Second Coming A. would come in his own power and strength. B. would, like John the Baptist, come in the "spirit and power of Elijah" the prophet. C. would be the resurrected Elijah. D. was not prophesied by Malachi or Christ.

19. The "Elijah to come" A. is proclaiming the world. B. is preparing a people spiritually for God's Kingdom. C. has been used by God to restore His truth in God's Church. D. All of the above.

20. The work of proclaiming Christ's Gospel to the world is A. being done solely by one man. B. being accomplished by God's Apostle with the support of the prayers, tithes and offerings of thousands of people. C. being done by the ministers of professing Christianity. D. now completely finished.

21. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached A. has yet to be restored and preached to the world. B. will be restored after Christ's return. C. is now being proclaimed to the world by Herbert W. Armstrong, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, and by those who assist him throughout the world. D. is being proclaimed by the Christian-professing churches.

22. The work of God's Church is ultimately performed by A. human beings alone. B. the power of the Holy Spirit, which works through God's human instruments. C. an entirely different source of power from that of the early Church of God. D. those who just study the Bible

.23. Which one of the following statements is NOT true? A. Modern technology has made it possible to reach multiple millions around the world with the Gospel. B. People in over 100 countries have access to the true Gospel via the pages of The Plain Truth and other free literature of the Worldwide Church of God. C. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is being "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" as Jesus said it would be. D. Jesus reached more people with the Gospel than His Church is reaching today.

24. What is the "sign" Jesus said would indicate that the end of this age and the beginning of the World Tomorrow are near? A. The preaching and publishing of the Gospel of God's coming Kingdom for a witness to all nations. B. The sun turning red and the stars falling. C. A great earthquake splitting the Mount of Olives in two. D. A nuclear war killing everyone on earth except true Christians.

25. The "sign" by which we can know that the end of human misrule and Jesus' Second Coming are near A. is yet to occur. B. happened in 1914. C. is the increasing membership in Christian-professing churches. D. is now being fulfilled by "The World Tomorrow" program, The

Plain Truth and Good News magazines, and this Bible correspondence course.

Lesson 19

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 19 WHAT and WHY the CHURCH of GOD? The Western world has taken the existence of churches for granted. WHY and by WHOM was the institution of the church founded ? What is its PURPOSE? The answers to these questions are vital to the fulfillment of God’s Master Plan! THE average person believes that a church is a building with a steeple on top and a cross on its facade. Indeed some dictionaries define it thus. People—at least some—go to this building every Sunday morning to attend a "worship service." But for many—and probably most—the church plays no part in their lives. Certainly God plays no part in their lives. God is not consciously in their world—just people, material things and interests. Of course, far back in the subconscious recesses of many minds may lie dormant the supposition that God exists. But He does not seem real to them. Yet the church, too, does exist. But why? What purpose does it serve?

Church a Part of God’s Plan

There is indeed a purpose being worked out here on earth. There is a reason for the existence of mankind, as you have learned in your previous studies. And for the working out of that awesome purpose God has a master plan. God’s Church is an essential part of that plan! To understand "what and why the Church," we must keep in mind the events that led up to the establishment of the Church. Also, we must not lose sight of who and what God is—the divine creating Family—and that God is now reproducing Himself through mankind.

Remember that Satan, formerly the cherub! Lucifer whom God had enthroned on the earth, rebelled against God. Thus the Government of God ceased to be administered on earth. Yet God allowed Satan to remain in power on that throne. God would not remove him from that position until a successor had qualified to replace Satan as world ruler, and actually been inducted into office!

Pertinent to the purpose of the Church is what happened shortly after the creation of the first man, Adam. The first human followed the way of Satan, rejecting the rule of the Government of God. The Eternal made Adam’s decision binding on the whole human race until the restoration of God’s government over the earth. Mankind would be allowed to follow the way of Satan for a duration of 6,000 years—until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to restore God’s government!

During this period, God would specially call and give His Spirit to just a few in order to serve Him in preparation for the coming Kingdom of God. God did choose the ancient nation of Israel to be His special people, but He did not promise to give them His Holy Spirit at that time as He gave it to their prophets and a few select others. This brings us historically to the time of Jesus the Messiah and His founding of the Church of God. But bear in mind that God’s purpose is the reproduction of Himself through mankind. The physical creation of man began with Adam—the first man. But the spiritual re-creation of man began with Jesus Christ—the second Adam who qualified to replace Satan as world ruler by proving that He would obey the Government of God and rule the earth by

God’s law. To Train Future World Rulers For Christ to restore God’s government over the earth, He will need a qualified and organized staff of God Beings to assist Him in ruling the nations. They will have rejected Satan’s false way and proved loyal to the Government and righteous ways of God during their mortal lives. In God’s supreme Master Plan, His Church was designed to prepare that dedicated and organized staff of God Beings. The Church, then, is God’s instrumentality for His overall purpose of reproducing Himself. Those God has called out of this world into His Church are the spirit-begotten and finally to be born Family of God which shall form the ruling Kingdom of God!

Let’s study the details as revealed in the Bible. But before you begin, be sure to get your tools for study—a Bible, some paper and a pen or pencil. Look up in your Bible the scripture references given in answer to the questions and write them down. Those who follow this method of Bible study already know how helpful it is in retaining and reviewing the vital truths they learn from God’s Word.

LESSON 19 How Satan’s World Began The Church of God has been called out of this world (2 Corinthians 6:14-17;Revelation 18:4). But why? What’s wrong with the world? This is a world of awesome progress. Men have gone to the moon and back. Photographs of the surface of Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn have been taken. The computer, the jet plane, the space shuttle and countless other marvels of science and technology have been produced. But this is not only a world of awesome progress, it is also a world of appalling troubles, evils, sorrows, suffering, anguish, violence and war. The world’s population is discontented and unhappy. Half of the world is illiterate. Millions live in abject poverty, filth and squalor! How did the world get this way?

Let’s briefly review what we have learned in previous lessons so we’ll better understand the real purpose for God’s Church. First, everything started with God. In the beginning we find two divine Personages—God and the Word (John 1:1). They had life—self-inherent life--with no beginning of days or end of life. Their job or profession was creating. And they had love for each other. They were in perfect agreement.

There also was leadership. God was the leader, and the Word did what God told Him to do. And God, through the Word who later became Jesus Christ, created the angels and the entire universe, including the earth (Ephesians 3:9). God placed the anointed cherub Lucifer on a throne on the earth and put angels under him. But Lucifer and these angels rebelled against the Government of God. They turned to the way of "get" rejecting the way of "give," to hate and opposition instead of love; to vanity, coveting, wanting to get; to jealousy, envy, rebellion against authority; to competition leading to strife, violence and destruction.

Lucifer and his angels swooped up to heaven in an attempt to knock God off His throne and rule the whole universe instead of just this earth. But they were cast back down to earth. As a result of their rebellion, the earth’s surface became ruined and full of darkness.

God then renewed the earth’s surface in six days, creating the flora and the fauna—the plants, animals, birds and fish. And He made man on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-31).

Man was made to ultimately be born into the God Family. But Adam was not given eternal life at his creation. He had only a temporary, chemical, physical existence. If Adam had taken of the tree of life, he would have eventually been given self-inherent life—self-sustaining, immortal life--from

God. How? He would have received the Spirit of God which would have begotten him spiritually as a child of God, later to be born of God! Had Adam taken of the tree of life, God would have continued to teach Adam and Eve. They would have received much spiritual knowledge before their children were born. And the Word, the God of the Old Testament who became Jesus Christ, would have begun inculcating the right attitude in Cain and Abel soon after they were born. When they became adults, they would have taught God’s way to their children.

God could have started the Church right in the Garden of Eden! Satan would have been banished, and God would have given Adam the throne of the earth, had he made the right choice.

Adam was on trial in the Garden of Eden to see if he would qualify to replace Satan and rule the entire earth. Adam would have to reject Satan’s way of living, which was represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam made the wrong decision. He ate of the tree of "death." He did not eat of the tree of "life." He therefore did not qualify to replace Satan as ruler of the earth. By eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam chose the way of self-acquired knowledge. It was Satan who influenced Adam, through Eve, to make the wrong decision. Satan now influenced everything Adam did. It was Satan who influenced Cain to kill Abel. It is Satan, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), who has been influencing the descendants of Adam and Eve ever since!

Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). This is Satan’s civilization which he started through the first man Adam when he sinned. It includes this world’s false education, its false religions, its system of governments and economies, and its social customs.

1. Is Satan the prince of the power of the air? Ephesians 2:2.

COMMENT: As prince of the power of the air, Satan broadcasts his attitudes of selfishness and vanity, of competition and strife. Satan’s broadcasting can be compared to television and radio broadcasting. For example, your radio picks up the electromagnetic waves which radiate from transmitters of various radio stations. The human mind can pick up Satan’s "broadcasts" because the human spirit in each individual is "in tune" with the devil’s spiritual "wavelength"! When Adam made his decision in the Garden of Eden, he rejected God, the Spirit of God and immortal life. The human spirit in Adam became "tuned in" to Satan’s spiritual wavelength from the time he first disobeyed God. And his descendants throughout time and into this twentieth century are still tuned in to Satan’s wavelength.

2. When Adam made the decision to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, did God then close up the Holy Spirit from Adam and his descendants? Genesis 3:23-24.

COMMENT: God would not allow Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of life after he sinned. The Holy Spirit was cut off from mankind until God made it available again through Christ, the second Adam—but then only to those God would call into His Church, which began on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, and which has continued down through the centuries to this very day. The Holy Spirit will not be poured out on all mankind until after Jesus Christ returns (see Joel 2:28). Future lessons of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course will fully explain God’s Master Plan of salvation for all of humanity. The REAL PURPOSE of the Church

1. When did the God Family decree that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, would come and pay the penalty of the sins of humanity? Revelation 13:8,last part.

COMMENT: Christ was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world [of Satan]"—that is, it was decreed at the time Adam made the wrong decision that the Lamb of God should die for the sins of all mankind.

2. But before Christ could fulfill His mission on earth, did He have to qualify to take over the throne of the earth? Matthew 4:1-11.

COMMENT: Jesus qualified to replace Satan as earth's ruler by overcoming him. He resisted the temptations of the devil after having fasted 40 days and 40 nights.

3. After qualifying to replace Satan as world ruler, did Jesus then begin preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God? Mark 1:13-15.Did He also call disciples so He could teach them personally? Mark 1:16-20;Mark 3:14.

COMMENT: Jesus called His twelve disciples before He started the New Testament Church. A disciple is a student or learner. Christ chose them--they didn't choose Him. He told Simon (Peter) and Andrew his brother: "Come ye after me, and I will make you...fishers of men."

Jesus taught and trained the twelve disciples so they could become teachers—so He could start the Church around them. The apostles would form part of the foundation of the Church. They would be the teachers of those whom God would call into His Church later. But none became members of the Church until after Jesus had ascended into heaven. Rather, He first called the disciples. Jesus Himself taught them so they could become teachers and members, upon their spiritual conversion. When Jesus did start the Church, He already had trained teachers.

4. Can "whosoever will" now receive God's Holy Spirit and thereby become a member of God's Church? John 6:44.

COMMENT: NO man can come to Christ—except the Spirit of the Father draws him. God the Father calls people to Christ and repentance (Romans 2:4;2 Timothy 2:25). And the disciples were called and trained so they could teach others God would call into His Church.

5. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was made available to those God calls into His Church, how many had God already called? Acts 1:15;Acts 2:1-4.How many did God add to the Church later that sameday? Acts 2:41.Did God also add others to the Church daily? Acts 2:47.

COMMENT: About 120 became members of God's Church on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, when they were begotten by the Holy Spirit. Another 3,000 were begotten of God later that same day. They were taught by the apostles. During the time of the apostles, the number of converted members continued to multiply and may have eventually increased to a hundred thousand or so—a number the membership of God's Church is approaching at the time of this writing. But Jesus Christ will not establish the Kingdom of God on earth until many more have been called and taught to become teachers.

6. Will the kingdoms (governments) of this world be ruled by the saints in the World Tomorrow? Daniel 7:18,Daniel 7:22, Daniel 7:27; Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:4.

COMMENT: The Church is the Kingdom of God in "embryo"—not yet born. The members are the begotten children of the World Tomorrow! Jesus came to start a new world—a new civilization—through them. They will help Him rule and teach His way of life when He returns. Church members are now in training so they can teach the millions and even billions during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period!

Those who are in God's Church are now being taught how to live. They're being taught the way to build a right society and a right civilization that will be both happy and productive. In the new civilization everybody will cooperate with one another. Everyone will be at peace and will truly enjoy life to the full! Tomorrow's world will have none of the troubles of Satan's world today.

7. Does God "test" or "try" those who are in training to become tomorrow's teachers, to determine if they will continue to obey the Government of God as Abraham did (Genesis 26:5)? Psalms 11:4-5;Jeremiah 17:10;1 Peter 4:12-13;James 1:2-4.

COMMENT: Those in God's Church had to make a decision as Adam did. They, too, had to decide whether or not they will follow God. Then, as they continue to live God's way, they are tried and tested so God will know that the "heart" of each member is truly turned to Him before his or her birth into the Family of God.

8. What did Christ command Peter, who was to become the leading apostle of the early Church? John 21:15-17.

COMMENT: God's Church today also follows Jesus' command to "feed my sheep." The Church has a vast educational program to teach the spirit begotten children of God. This is accomplished through the teaching of members by God's ministers in weekly Sabbath services and through the Church's publications. The Worldwide Church of God publishes numerous booklets, this Bible Correspondence Course you are using in this study of the Bible, The Plain Truth, The Good News and Youth magazines. There is also an organized educational program for the youth of the Church. Then there is "The WORLD TOMORROW" broadcast on television and radio.

These are the major means by which the Church teaches ("feeds") its members—those who have been called into God's Church to become students so they can be taught to become teachers. Teachers must first be taught before they can teach others. God is now, through His Church, teaching future teachers to teach the rest of mankind! The real and awesome purpose of God's Church is to produce teachers of millions (and eventually billions) of people in the World Tomorrow so everyone will learn the way to become spirit-born members of the God Family!

9. In the meantime, did God also command His Church to preach His truth to the world? Matthew 28:19-20.Did Jesus prophesy that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God would be proclaimed to the world as a witness before the end of Satan's world and the ushering in of the World Tomorrow? Matthew 24:3,Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10.

COMMENT: The Church's preaching and publishing of Christ's Gospel to the world is the primary means by which God calls various ones into His Church to be trained. To those millions who hear it, but whom God is not calling at this time, it is merely a witness. The FOUNDATION of the Church

How and when did Jesus Christ begin the Church of God? In a sense, He started it long ago through the prophets of the Old Testament era. The prophets, together with Jesus and His

apostles, constitute the foundation of the spiritual House of God which is now being built by Christ. Let’s understand.

1. Did Jesus say He would build His Church? Matthew 16:18.

COMMENT: This is the first place in the Bible where the word church is used. It is translated from the original Greek word ekklesia and means "called out ones"—from ek (out), and klesia (called). The Greek word means "a calling out" to meet together, especially as a religious congregation. It does not mean a building, as commonly assumed today.

2. What had to occur before the New Testament Church could be founded? John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: The Church could not be founded until Jesus had ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit was sent to spiritually beget those the Father had called. Nevertheless, God long ago began calling out a few to form part of the foundation of the Church, namely Abraham and the other prophets. This undoubtedly even includes Abel, Enoch and Noah, for these righteous men were used by God to play some part in the future ruling Kingdom of God.

Thus the Eternal began laying the actual foundation of His Church through the prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Through the years from Abraham until Christ, God called His prophets out of Satan’s world to be a part of the foundation of the Church of God.

3. What were the apostles to form along with the prophets? Ephesians 2:19-22,especially Ephesians 2:20. Who is the head of the Church? Ephesians 5:23.

COMMENT: During the three and one-half years of Jesus’ earthly ministry, He called out twelve apostles who would also be a part of the foundation of the Church. Christ taught and trained them as He proceeded to do the Work of God.

Jesus thus built His Church on the foundation of the apostles and the Old Testament prophets, with Jesus Himself being the Head of the Church— the "Chief Cornerstone" of the spiritual Temple of God.

4. After having trained the twelve apostles, when did Jesus actually start the Church? Acts 2:1-4.

COMMENT: The New Testament Church was founded on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, when about 120 were begotten by God’s Holy Spirit. And it is by God’s Spirit which resided in all the prophets, apostles and other Church brethren that they shall be resurrected (or changed, if still alive) to immortality at Christ’s Second Coming in power and glory!

Thus the Church—the Kingdom of God in "embryo"—is composed of the very first of all humans who shall be born into the Kingdom of God as God Beings!

5. In the spiritual Temple—the Church—which Christ has been building, who will compose the "pillars"? Revelation 3:7,Revelation 3:12.

COMMENT: The pillars of a building have a very important function. Pillars are often major supports for the superstructure of a building. The Philadelphia era of God’s Church has proven loyal to God—has not denied Christ and has kept His Word (Revelation 3:8). This era has proven to be especially faithful in upholding and teaching God’s truths and way of life to the world. When

one considers the tremendous amount of spiritual knowledge God has revealed to His apostle of modern times, and the great educational thrust of God's Church today, one might logically conclude that in the World Tomorrow the Philadelphia era of God's Church may form a major part of the educational arm of God's Kingdom to teach His way of life to the whole world. This would explain why God has called into His Church people of all ethnic backgrounds from the nations of the world today. As members of the Philadelphia era of God's Church now in training, they will be prepared to teach their own people after Christ returns!

Government in the Church The Church—God's spiritual Temple which Christ is building—must be, and is, held together solidly. How is this possible? It is Church government that cements and welds together the members of the body of Christ so that all function in peace, harmony and unity of purpose!

1. Who set government in the Church? 1 Corinthians 12:28.

COMMENT: Just as ancient Israel's government, as established by God, was the "Church" or congregation of the Old Testament era, was also a nation in the world, hierarchical, the Church of God today is organized under theocratic government, hierarchical in form. Government is from the top down—the very opposite of democracy. The members do not set officials in the Church—God does, even as He sets the lay members in the Church (1 Corinthians 12:18;John 6:44;Acts 2:47). The government presently in God's Church is the same form of government by which Christ shall rule all nations during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period. Those in God's Church today have voluntarily placed themselves under the authority of His government. Thus they are learning to rule in the Kingdom of God. How? By first being ruled by the Government of God during their mortal lives. God's Spirit-begotten children learn to rule in preparation for the World Tomorrow by submitting to and administering God's government within His Church today! Let's understand.

2. Who is the Head of the Church? Ephesians 1:22-23;Ephesians 5:22-24.

COMMENT: Christ is the Head of the Church even as the husband is the head of the wife. The human family is a type of the divine Family of God and is to be governed according to the Law of God which is summed up by the word love. By following the principles of God's government in our families, we are learning how to apply God's way of love, and rightly govern those Christ will place under our rule in the Millennium!

3. As Head of the Church, how does Christ rule? Ephesians 5:25.

COMMENT: Christ rules the Church—His wife-to-be—in love, always doing what is best for her. He loved the Church so much that He died for her so she could be forgiven her sins and made immortal at His Second Coming.

Husbands are to submit to Christ and follow His example of love toward their own families. They, too, are to govern in love—not as tyrants! Husbands and fathers should rule their households according to God's law--governing for the good of those governed. And wives are to submit to their own husbands as the Church is to submit to Christ (Ephesians 5:24). How clear it is that God's people learn to rule by being ruled!

4. Under Christ’s leadership and direction, are there various functions in God’s Church? 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.And is the Church of God thoroughly organized? Ephesians 2:19-22;Ephesians 4:15-16.

COMMENT: The Church—"the household of God"—is a family, even as God is a divine Family. The Church is also compared to a building and a human body with its various parts. Today the Church is well organized according to Jesus Christ’s instructions which are found in His written Word. All the parts are joined and functioning together in harmony and teamwork. The Church is compressed together, as closely as if welded. This shows organized unity!

5. To administer the various operations of the Church, what spiritual offices has God set in the Church under Christ? Ephesians 4:11-12.

COMMENT: An apostle is "one sent forth" with Christ’s Gospel Message of the coming Kingdom of God. The apostle also supervises the proclaiming of that message to the world by means and persons other than himself. Also, an apostle has supervision over all the local congregations or churches of God (1 Corinthians 16:1;2 Corinthians 11:28). The prophets set in the foundation of the Church are those of the Old Testament era, whose writings were used to form a considerable part of New Testament teaching and functioning. The word "prophesy" is often used in the sense of "to preach, or proclaim." So some of the preachers in God’s Church might well be termed "prophets"—but no literal prophets in the early New Testament Church are mentioned as having any executive, administrative, or preaching functions.

Evangelists in Paul’s day were leading ministers proclaiming the Gospel to the public, even raising up local churches and having supervision over some churches under an apostle. Therefore, an evangelist may hold executive function under the apostle in the Church today. An evangelist is not necessarily stationed in one place.

Pastors are ministers placed over a local church or group of local churches. In the early New Testament Church there were also teachers who were not necessarily preachers. Yet all ministers and teachers are called elders in other New Testament passages. Therefore, in God’s Church today there are both preaching and non-preaching elders. Preaching elders pastor local churches. Then some elders, not all of whom are preachers, are called local elders in the Church today.

6. Do members of the body of Christ decide for themselves what they want to believe, or have they received their beliefs and doctrines from the apostles of Jesus Christ who, along with the Old Testament prophets, are part of the very foundation of God’s New Testament Church? Acts 2:42;Ephesians 2:20.Where did Christ’s apostles get their doctrines? Matthew 28:18-20.

COMMENT: The early New Testament Church received its beliefs, teachings and customs from the apostles who had been taught by Christ personally. (Included were the writings of the Old Testament prophets, as mentioned before.) Thus the individuals in the early Church did not decide doctrine for themselves, nor did they individually receive the truth from Christ. Christ taught the apostles and He held them responsible for teaching the doctrines to the Church.

7. What did God, through the Apostle Paul, instruct the Church to speak? 1 Corinthians 1:10.

COMMENT: God’s Word states that all the members of the body of Christ must "speak the same thing." In other words, there must be no division in what is believed, taught, or preached. God’s

Church cannot be divided! Therefore, individual members of the body of Christ today also continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrines—just as the early New Testament Christians did. The doctrines of God's Church came from God through Jesus Christ, who taught the original apostles. These same doctrines are taught by God's apostle today, whom Christ taught through His written Word. God's present-day apostle, in turn, has taught the ministers of God under him. And, every Sabbath, these ministers faithfully teach these same doctrines to members of God's Church in congregations of like-minded individuals in many nations around the world!

Function of the Individual Members

1. Is God's Church made up of those individual members who are a part of the "body of Christ"? 1 Corinthians 12:27.Does the Church have many members as does the human body? 1 Corinthians 12:12-14. Is each member important within the one body? 1 Corinthians 12:18-25.

COMMENT: We have seen that the Church is made up of the Spirit-begotten children of God whom the Father has called out of the world. It is the "body of Christ." It is the organized spiritual organism—the affianced bride of Christ which shall be married to Him after her resurrection or change to immortality. With the help of God's Holy Spirit, the individual members of the Church are overcoming Satan, the world and their own carnal natures. They are developing the holy, righteous character of God. Thus they are qualifying to sit with Christ on the throne of worldwide government—to rule and teach the nations. But what specific functions do the members serve in the Church today? As we have learned, the proclaiming of the good news of the coming Kingdom of God and "feeding" the membership is a twofold function of the Church. The individual lay member has a vital part in one of these functions: proclaiming the Gospel to the world. How? Certainly not by personally proclaiming Christ's message to his community or to the world. That is done primarily by the apostle, to some extent by evangelists, and to a lesser extent in local areas by Church pastors. (The chief responsibility of a pastor is supervision of, and preaching to, a local Church, as mentioned before.) In the first century, the Gospel was proclaimed by the apostles and evangelists. But how much of a part did the individual lay members have in it? Much indeed! Without this larger body of lay members, the apostles could not have carried out Christ's Great Commission!

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, says emphatically that he, as Christ's apostle today, and the evangelists, pastors and elders could not carry on the Work of God's Church without the loyal backing and continual encouragement of the lay members.

Neither can the individual lay members develop God's holy, righteous and perfect character without the functions of the apostle, evangelists, pastors and elders. All these various members whom God has set in His Church are interdependent—mutually dependent on one another. They form a TEAM—an organized spiritual organism—utterly different from any secular and worldly organization! How, more specifically, does this mutual dependency operate? In general, the whole operation of the Church costs money in this late twentieth century world. Facilities and methods that did not exist in the first century world, such as television, radio and the printed page, are available to the Church for the performance of its Commission. Without the tithes and generous freewill offerings of the lay members, the Church's Commission could not be fulfilled in today's world! Also, without the fervent and prevailing, continual PRAYERS of the members, the work of God's Church could not be accomplished. And without the continual ENCOURAGEMENT of lay

members and those over them locally, those operating from Headquarters could not bear up under the persecutions, oppositions and trials of doing God’s end-time Work!

Conversely, the lay members need just as urgently the encouragement, teaching, counseling and leadership from Headquarters and from local pastors. How beautiful is the organized teamwork in God’s Church! The Church as Spiritual "Mother"

God reveals that His Church is the spiritual "mother" of spirit-begotten Christians. They are spiritual "embryos" and "fetuses"— already children of God, but as yet unborn—because they are still growing spiritually after having been begotten by God’s Holy Spirit. The Church is thus God’s spiritual organism for feeding with spiritual food and training and developing in righteous character the future Spirit-born sons of God the Father!

Let’s fully understand this wonderful truth. Let’s see how human reproduction pictures spiritual reproduction, and learn exactly what part God’s Church plays in developing future members of the divine Family of God.

Human begettal, the period of gestation and then finally birth are types of spiritual reproduction—of being born into the God Family. Human reproduction pictures spiritual salvation.

All human life begins as a tiny egg—called an ovum—produced inside the human mother. But this ovum has a very limited life. Some doctors and scientists believe it has a life span of approximately 24 hours, unless fertilized by a sperm cell produced in the body of the human father. Upon entering the ovum, the sperm finds its way to and joins with the ovum nucleus. This begins the development of a new human being. But it is not yet a born human being. Human life has merely been begotten. For the first few months it is called an embryo. Then, until birth, it is called a fetus. The newly-begotten embryo must be fed and nourished with physical food through the mother. As a result of this physical nourishment it grows, and grows and GROWS—until it is ready to be born, normally after nine months.

Now notice the amazing comparison between human reproduction and spiritual reproduction. A human has to be begotten by a human father. And to be born of God—as a God Being in the Family of God—one must first be begotten by the spiritual Father—Almighty God! Let’s grasp this amazing truth.

1. Does the Spirit of God impart God’s divine life and nature to a person when he is begotten by God the Father? 2 Peter 1:4.But how much of God’s Spirit does one receive when spiritually begotten? 2 Corinthians 5:5.Is one so begotten a literal child of God? Romans 8:16;1 John 3:1-2.

COMMENT: By analogy each adult human life can be compared to an "egg" or "ovum." This "ovum" has a very limited life span—an average of about 70 years—compared to eternal life. But spiritual, divine immortal life may be imparted to it by God the Father. As the physical male sperm finds its way to and unites with the nucleus in the ovum, so God’s Spirit enters and combines with the human spirit in man! This happens upon receipt of the Holy Spirit—after real repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands of a true minister of God.

One thus begotten by the Spirit of God is now a babe in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1). He is already a child of God, though yet unborn. By direct analogy the embryo in a mother’s womb is already the child of its parents, though not yet born. A spirit-begotten child of God now has the presence of

eternal life-God life—through God's Spirit, but he is not yet an immortal spirit being—not yet born of God—not yet an inheritor and possessor. He is merely an "heir" with Christ (Romans 8:17). The divine life of God has merely been begotten. This divine life and character starts so very small in one it is doubtful if much of it is in evidence—except for the glow of that ecstasy of spiritual "romance" which one may radiate in that "first love" of conversion, spiritually speaking. But so far as spiritual knowledge and developed righteous character goes, there is not much—yet.

Once spiritually begotten, we are merely a spiritual "embryo." Now we must be fed and nourished on spiritual food so we can grow spiritually! Jesus said man shall not live by bread (physical food) alone, but by every word of God (spiritual food)! This we take in from the Bible. Our spiritual growth and development of God's righteous character also comes through personal, intimate, daily contact with God through prayer, and through Christian fellowship with other Spirit-begotten children in God's Church. And also by the spiritual teaching imparted by the Church!

2. What is God's Church—"Jerusalem above"—called in Galatians 4:26?

COMMENT: Beginning with verse 22 of Galatians chapter 4 is an allegory about the two covenants—the Old Covenant made with national Israel at Mt. Sinai, and the New Covenant to be made with Christ's spiritual Church at His return, as we learned in Lesson 17. In this allegory the Church is called "the mother of us all"—that is, of those in the Church of God. Notice the parallel of spiritual reproduction with human reproduction! The Church is the spiritual "mother" of its members—just as a human mother is the mother of her begotten, but unborn child. And the physical embryo is fed physically through the mother.

3. Has God set His called and chosen ministers in His Church to nourish the members so they will grow spiritually? 1 Peter 5:1-3;Ephesians 4:11-13.

COMMENT: The human mother carries her unborn baby in that part of her body where she can best protect it from physical harm; and that protection is part of her function, as well as to nourish the unborn child. Likewise, the Church, through Christ's ministry, spiritually nourishes—instructs, teaches, counsels, advises—and protects the unborn children of God from the spiritual harm of false ministers and false doctrines!

4. As the physical embryo and then fetus must grow physically until it is developed enough to be born, must the spirit-begotten Christian also grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ? 2 Peter 3:18.Must he overcome and develop in spiritual character during this life in order to be born into the Kingdom of God? Revelation 21:7.

COMMENT: As the physical embryo gradually develops the organs, features, and characteristics of a human being, even so the Spirit-begotten Christian must gradually develop the righteous character of God—love, faith, patience, gentleness, temperance, etc. (Galatians 5:22-23). He (or she) does so by living by—being a doer of—the Word of God! And it is the function of the Church—as the spiritual "mother" of Christians—to help them develop the holy, righteous and perfect character of God.

Then, in God's due time, by a resurrection or by instantaneous change to immortality at Christ's coming (Romans 8:11;1 Corinthians 15:49-53;1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), the begotten child of God shall be born of God—enter into the Kingdom or Family of God!

5. Will one thus born again be composed of spirit, even as God is spirit? John 3:5-8;John 4:24.

COMMENT: How wonderfully human reproduction pictures spiritual reproduction in God’s Family! Yet, by his deceptions Satan has blinded humanity to the fact that we may be born as spirit-composed individuals—as part of that divine Family—as part of the God Kingdom of which the Church is now in embryonic form!

Salvation Outside of God’s Church? Can a person receive salvation outside of God’s Church—the "mother" through whom His Spirit-begotten children are being fed spiritual food? What does the Bible say?

Jesus Christ said: "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). He did not say: "I will organize dozens of different groups or churches." There is no record in the Bible of Jesus building two, three, a dozen or perhaps several hundred churches or religions having different teachings and beliefs.

Jesus came to build only ONE Church! (Ephesians 4:4.) And the one and only Church Jesus said He would build began in A.D. 31 with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples who were assembled "with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). The members of God’s Church do not merely decide that they would like to "join" His Church, decide what they would like to believe, and begin attending services. It is God who calls an individual and grants repentance (John 6:44;Romans 2:4), and new members are added to the Church of God only upon repentance, baptism and receipt of God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The repentant believer becomes a begotten child of God when he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. And he believes the doctrines Jesus has put into His Church. Let’s understand further.

1. To what did Jesus liken Himself by analogy? John 15:1.And to what did He compare individual members of His Church? John 15:5. Can the branches bear fruit apart from the vine? John 15:4.

COMMENT: Jesus pictured Himself as the vine and those of His Church as the branches on that vine. Notice that Jesus is not several separated vines—He is one vine! The members of the body of Christ are the branches--but not separated, isolated branches. All are joined to the one vine—the body of Christ.

2. But what happens to those branches that are separated and broken off from the vine—that separate themselves from the body of Christ? John 15:2, John 15:6.

COMMENT: Jesus was speaking to those chosen to be apostles in His Church. He told them that the Father is the husbandman—the vine-dresser (John 15:1). Every branch of this vine (the body of Christ, the Church) that does not bear fruit for the Kingdom, the Father cuts off so that the organized, united vine may bear more fruit.

Jesus’ analogy is a grave warning to those who would cut themselves off from His Church. They will stop growing, wither and finally die spiritually!

3. Will those who decided to seek personal salvation "outside" of God’s Church be married to Christ when He marries His affianced bride—the Church of God—at His return? Revelation 19:7;Matthew 25:10-12.

COMMENT: Only those who are a part of the bride that has made herself ready will be married to Christ at His return, as was discussed in Lesson 17. Christ will marry His Church—not a conglomeration of disunited groups, denominations or isolated individuals who try to follow Christ in their own way instead of God's way (Proverbs 14:12).

If one leaves the body of Christ and no longer wants to have a part in what it is doing, he has gone away from Christ and will not be a part of the bride that is to marry Him, because Jesus Christ is going to marry God's one and only united Church! At Christ's soon coming, His wife-to-be shall have made herself ready and will enter into the New Covenant marriage with Him. The door will then be shut to all those who falsely assumed they were ready when the bridegroom, Christ, comes to marry His Church. Those who thought they could "go it alone" or joined various groups or denominations of men will come and knock on the door—but Christ will say, "I know you not" (Matthew 25:12).

God Himself laid out the plan of salvation and the method by which humans, after spiritual begettal, may be trained and prepared to become the spirit-born God Beings in the Kingdom of God. God's ruling Family, having learned God's pattern of mutual teamwork and cooperation to function perfectly together. The numbers of God's divine Family will rule with the Father and Christ forever!

One who says, "I will live alone in Satan's world—I will be no part of the Family"—is, therefore, obviously not in the Family! He will not have been trained and developed in spiritual character according to God's pattern and plan. Such a one cannot fit in as a part of the God Family if not trained and developed within the spirit-begotten Family—the Church!

God will not allow anyone into His Family who refuses to be part of the Church receiving spiritual training. This is why it is so important for those who are now called and begotten of God to grow and overcome, and be loyal and obedient to the Government of God in His Church—for the Church is indeed the Kingdom of God in embryo, soon to be born God!

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. A church, as referred to in the Bible, A. is a building with a steeple and a cross. B. could not be defined as a congregation of worshippers. C.is in reality the people who worship God. D. is no longer necessary in today's society.

2. What would NOT have happened if Adam had taken of the tree of life? A.God would have continued to teach Adam and Eve more about His way of life. B. God could have started His Church in the Garden of Eden. C. God would have banished Satan and given Adam the throne of the earth. D. Adam would have immediately become a spirit being.

3. After Adam sinned by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, A. he received the Holy Spirit and became part of the foundation of the Church. B. God cut off the Holy Spirit from everyone except for a few He would call to help prepare for His Kingdom. C. God’s plan for mankind was ruined without any hope of repairing the damage. D. God made Adam ruler of this world.

4. Before Christ could fulfill His mission on earth and begin the New Testament Church, He had to A. qualify to replace Satan as earth’s ruler by overcoming him. B. merely finish preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. C. discredit the Pharisees’ authority. D. bind Satan for 1,000 years.

5. Which one of the following statements does NOT explain why Christ called twelve disciples before beginning His Church? A. So He could personally train them to be teachers. B. So they could teach others God would call into His Church later. C. To keep the membership small. D. So they would form part of the foundation of the Church.

6. Who can become a member of God’s Church? A. Only those whom the Father specially chooses to call. B. Anyone who wants eternal life. C. Only those who are already "born again." D. Anyone who calls Jesus" Lord."

7.Which one of the following is NOT a purpose for God’s Church? A. To train rulers for the World Ahead. B. To train teachers who will teach the knowledge of the way to salvation to everyone in the Millennium. C. To prepare its members to help Christ build a new civilization on earth. D.To help reform this world now.

8. God is testing or trying all the members of His Church A. to know whether they will continue to obey His government. B. to see them suffer. C. to disqualify as many as possible from being rulers and teachers. D. for no apparent reason.

9. The Church of God is "feeding" (teaching) Spirit-begotten children of God A. through Bible camps and religious communes. B. in weekly Sabbath services and through the Church’s publications. C. by requiring them to attend Ambassador College. D. All of the above.

10. What did God command the Church to do for the world before Christ returns? A. To preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations as a witness. B. To participate in humanitarian efforts to solve this world’s problems. C. To work for world peace through better government. D. To bring salvation to as many people as possible.

11. Which of the following is a TRUE statement about the New Testament Church Jesus founded? A. Jesus founded the Church before He ascended to heaven. B. God called only Old Testament prophets to form the foundation for the future Church of God. C. The actual foundation was composed of Christ and the apostles only. D. Both Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles formed its foundation, with Christ as the Chief Cornerstone.

12. What holds God’s Church together? A. The natural cooperation of its members. B. Church government, which unites the members to function in harmony. C. The absence of Satan’s influence. D. Democratic government.

13. Who established government in the Church? A. The Pastor General, God’s Apostle. B. Satan the devil. C. God Almighty, who chooses the human leaders to administer His government. D. The

members, as in a democracy.

14. Who is the real Head of the Church? A. Christ, who rules the Church in love. B. Pastor General . C. The Bishop of Rome. D. No head is needed since the members live by God’s Law of love.

15. Those in God’s Church today are learning to become rulers in the Kingdom of God by A. being dictators over their families. B. voluntarily placing themselves under the authority of God’s government. C. disregarding God’s government. D. deciding for themselves which laws of God to obey.

16. In what way is the Church organized? A. Very poorly. B. Without Christ’s leadership. C. All parts, like that of a human body, are joined and functioning together in harmony and teamwork. D. With no offices of responsibility to keep the Church functioning smoothly.

17. The function of an apostle in God’s Church, both in early New Testament times and today, is to A. proclaim Christ’s Gospel message of the coming Kingdom of God . B. supervise those who assist him in proclaiming the Gospel. C. supervise local congregations of the Church. D. All of the above.

18. The doctrines of God’s Church A. were written in the Bible by the prophets and apostles, who were inspired by the One who became Jesus Christ. B. did not originate with God the Father. C. were not documented in written form, but rather passed orally. D. are revealed to each member by Christ Himself.

19. Which one of the following does NOT describe the Church of God? A. It is the "body of Christ." B. It includes independent Christians outside of the body of Christ. C. It is the Kingdom of God in "embryo," soon to be born of God. D. It is the Spirit-begotten affianced bride of Christ that shall marry Him after being made immortal.

20. The members of the body of Christ help support the Church’s work by A. their prevailing prayers. B. their tithes and offerings. C. their encouragement of those God has placed in leadership roles in His Church. D. All of the above.

21. Once spiritually begotten, a Christian A. does not need to grow spiritually. B. must be fed and nourished with spiritual food through his spiritual "mother," God’s Church, to grow spiritually. C. does not need personal, daily contact with God through prayer. D. is already "saved."

22. A Spirit-begotten Christian is to grow spiritually in grace and knowledge A. by attending church every Sunday. B. by trying to convert others. C. through Bible study, prayer, fellowship. and being taught by the ministry of God‘s Church. D. only through fellowship with other Spirit-begotten children of God.

23. When Christ said, "I will build my church," He meant A. He would establish many different churches or religions having different teachings and beliefs. B. He would build one unified and organized group of believers—one true Church. C. His Church would be a loose assemblage of those who merely believe on Him. D. the hundreds of denominations making up the Christian professing world today.

24. Spiritual salvation is possible A. by joining the church of one’s choice. B. either outside or inside of God’s Church. C. only by bearing spiritual fruit as a "branch" attached to the one true Vine—Christ—the Head of God’s Church. D. if one is not a part of the body of Christ.

25. If an individual leaves the body of Christ to "follow Christ in his own way," or does not want to participate in the work God’s Church is doing, he A. has rejected the instrumentality God uses in the spiritual training necessary to be in His ruling Family. B. will spiritually wither and die, like a branch cut off from its vine. C. will not be a part of the "bride" that is to marry Christ at His coming. D. All of the above.

Lesson 20

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 20 In Training For Rulership

Jesus Christ will soon return as Supreme Ruler to establish the world-ruling Kingdom of God. But what about YOU? Will you be one of Christ's assistants in the World Tomorrow? How can one be TRAINED to rule with Him? THE SAVIOR of mankind came to earth over 1,900 years ago with a message—the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. We call that message the "Gospel"—an old English word that meant "good news." The Kingdom of God will rule over all nations, and the Supreme Ruler on earth will be Jesus Christ Himself. But Christ will not rule over thousands of millions of people all by Himself while Spirit-born Christians take an eternal vacation. The Bible shows they will rule the earth with Him!

Trained to Rule In 1948, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain gave birth to her first son, Charles. Everyone knew he was destined to become monarch over the British Commonwealth. From his birth he has received the education and training necessary to prepare him to become the next king of England. And now Prince Charles' firstborn son, Prince William, will also be trained to become king.

Just as surely as Prince Charles was born into the reigning family of England to become a king, you, if you are a Spirit-begotten child of God, are destined, when born of God's Spirit into the ruling Family of God, to reign as a far greater and ETERNAL KING! As Prince William is heir to the throne his father will someday inherit, you are the heir of a spiritual King! (Romans 8:16-17.) And as the royal heirs of the throne of England receive special training for their future position, so do true Christians. The Christian life is the preparation and training necessary for rulership in the eternal Kingdom of God!

Saints to Rule in God's Kingdom A kingdom is a nation composed of people, as well as the government of that nation. The Kingdom of God is the divine Family of God, presently composed of God the Father and God the Son (Christ) in heaven, and of Spirit-begotten sons and daughters—not yet born—on earth.

God's Family is a ruling Family. And it is the Spirit-begotten children of God who will, at the first resurrection, be born of God and become part of that divine ruling Kingdom! Notice:

"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Daniel 7:27).

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). And after that? "They shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5).

Those whom Daniel called "saints" will be resurrected or changed to immortality and given positions of rulership in God's Kingdom. But who will they rule over? And where will they reign?

Notice Revelation 2:26-27:"And he that overcometh...to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." The Kingdom of God, with Christ as King (Revelation 11:15;Revelation 19:16), will rule over all mortals on earth (Revelation 5:10). And the law by which Christ and the immortal saints will rule is the law that expresses the loving nature and character of God—the Ten Commandments!

Rewarded According to Our Works

God has an exciting future beyond imagination in store for those who willingly follow His way of life, grow and overcome spiritually. Not only will they inherit eternal life as the free gift of God and become eternal members of the God Family, they will also be rewarded—not with the temporary rewards of men, but with rewards of eternal responsibility. Every Christian's reward will be exciting and fulfilling for all eternity! In God's government will be many important offices of responsibility. God will give these responsibilities to those who have qualified for them during their training period. In complete fairness, all will be rewarded according to the "works" they did during their Christian lives (Matthew 16:27). And because every member, when born into God's Family, will be completely yielded to God's government, everyone will be completely satisfied with the responsibilities and power God will give them.

Let's understand how God will reward those who have been freely given the opportunity to become His children. Let's see how one can prepare for exciting power in God's ruling Family! But before we begin, get your Bible, some paper, and a pen or pencil. Look up the Bible verses given in answer to the questions and read them. You may also want to write these scriptures down. Many of our students have discovered that writing them out helps to increase their understanding and memory. Now let's begin.

LESSON 20 The Kingdom of God Is DUAL

God has a message for mankind that is so important He commissioned His own Son to be the first to deliver it. As we learned in Lesson 18, that supremely important message is the Gospel—the good news—of the coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). That same message is being proclaimed to the world today by God's Church!

Actually, the central message of the entire Bible is the coming Kingdom of God on earth. The ancient kingdom of Israel was a physical type or forerunner of the Kingdom of God. Many of the prophecies of the Bible show how God's Kingdom will be established. Jesus' life and teachings, and His sacrifice and resurrection reveal how we may become members of God's Kingdom. Christ, the King of that coming Kingdom, and His apostles preached about many aspects of the Kingdom of God.

Let's briefly review, first, what the Kingdom of God is. Lesson 18 showed that God's Kingdom will be a literal government ruling over the nations of earth. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image makes that very clear (Daniel 2:1-49). But the Kingdom of God is more than just the government of God. It is also the Family of God, into which humans may be born as spirit members. As a governing or ruling family, it will exercise jurisdiction over all nations on earth—and, ultimately, over the entire universe!

Let’s understand more about these two aspects of God’s Kingdom, beginning with the Family of God. The Ruling Family of God The coming government of God on earth will be administered by the ruling Family of God. When Jesus came preaching about the Kingdom of God, He was talking about the Family of God, and how humans, through Him, may be born into it.

1. Did Jesus, in His conversation with Nicodemus, reveal the family nature of the Kingdom of God? John 3:3,John 3:5.

COMMENT: Christ showed that the Kingdom of God is the Family of God into which we may be born as very God Beings (no longer human beings, but divine beings)--literally BORN of God’s Spirit into the very God Family! As previous lessons have shown, God is not a single Personage. The Hebrew word for God is Elohim (Genesis 1:1), which denotes more than one person. God is a family of Personages, or "kingdom" composed of more than one being. There is the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, and the animal kingdom. Then there is an angel kingdom created by God and composed of spirit. And then, high above all, is the God Kingdom. In other words, the Kingdom of God!

2. What is the pattern of government God has set for the human family? Ephesians 5:23-24;Ephesians 6:1-2.

COMMENT: God created the human family to be a physical type of His own Family. Therefore He instructs human families to have government from the top down, just as His divine Family does. God’s Family has a ruling structure, with various responsibilities to be fulfilled by Spirit-born children of God, all organized into a world-ruling government!

God’s Perfect Government

God originally set the archangel Lucifer on earth to administer the government of God over the angels He had placed here. But God’s government ceased to be administered on earth when Lucifer (now Satan) rebelled against His Creator. In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam the opportunity to replace Satan as world ruler. Adam failed by making the wrong choice. Four thousand years later, Jesus Christ came as the second Adam and, by obeying God’s Law, qualified to rule the earth. But Christ did not immediately begin ruling. He returned to heaven and established His Church on earth through God’s Spirit, thus making it possible for many to qualify to rule with Him. It would be nearly 2,000 years until Christ returns from heaven to restore God’s government over the entire earth (Acts 3:19-21).

Let’s review some basic scriptures covering the governmental aspect of the coming world-ruling Kingdom of God.

1. When the Kingdom of God is established on earth, will it take over the governments of this world? Revelation 11:15.Who will become king over all the earth? Same verse; Zechariah 14:9;Revelation 19:16.How long will He reign? Revelation 11:15.Did Christ clearly state that He was born to be a king? John 18:37.

COMMENT: These scriptures reveal that God is Supreme Ruler, and that the government of God will take over the governments of this world at Christ’s return. The Bible tells us in the plainest of language that Jesus Christ was born to be King of the earth. He will rule all nations and His government will last forever!

2. What did Christ say to Pilate to show clearly that His Kingdom had not yet been established on earth? John 18:36.

COMMENT: Christ s Kingdom is not part of this world's civilization. It will not begin to rule on earth until His Second Coming.

3. When Jesus Christ is ruling from Jerusalem, what will the world be like under His government? Micah 4:1-4;Isaiah 11:6-9.

COMMENT: When the Kingdom of God takes over the governments of this earth and the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ begins (commonly called the Millennium), His rule will bring peace, happiness and joy to all mankind.

Notice that in the Millennium there will be babies and young children on earth. They will be mortal, flesh and blood human beings—not spirit beings. And since Spirit-begotten Christians will have already been made immortal Sons of God at the resurrection, there will be both mortals and immortals living at the same time throughout the Millennium.

4. Where will Satan be during the thousand years? Revelation 20:1-3.

COMMENT: Satan will be put away where he can do no harm. He will be gone and Christ will be here! Instead of the evil spirit or attitude of Satan pervading the atmosphere, influencing everyone and causing evil as it does today (Ephesians 2:2), the Holy Spirit of God will infuse the atmosphere! The Holy Spirit, represented by "living waters" (Zechariah 14:8;John 7:38-39), will flow out from Christ and begin to heal the spiritual problems of mankind. The government of the World Tomorrow will be based on God's Law of love. With the help and inspiration of God's Holy Spirit given to them, people will begin to truly love one another—to have godly concern for fellowman.

God's government will not be a democracy. It will not be socialism, communism or fascism. It will not be human monarchy, oligarchy or plutocracy. It will not be man's government over man. Man has proven his utter incapability of ruling himself!

It will be divine government—the government of God. It will not be government from the bottom up. The people will not vote their leaders into office. No time or money will be wasted on campaigning and elections. It will not be government of or by the people—but it will be government for the people. It will be government from the top (God Almighty) down. In the World Tomorrow, all officials will be members of God's Family— divine spirit beings, appointed by Christ Himself even down to the level of mayors over cities. The Bible tells us that under the leadership of Jesus Christ, God's government will produce a utopian paradise on earth. As we learned in Lesson 4, God will begin to work first with the descendants of the children of Jacob. Using them as a model and example, God will rebuild and bless all nations!

Completely New Civilization to Be Built! The Kingdom of God includes much more than bringing this world's governments under God's rule. A completely new civilization will have to be built! Let's understand.

1. Is God's Church compared to a building? 1 Corinthians 3:9;1 Peter 2:5. What foundation is it built upon? Ephesians 2:19-22.Just how important is a solid foundation to any building? Matthew

7:24-27.

COMMENT: The Church of God is built on God’s rock-solid spiritual foundation—the teachings of Jesus Christ, His apostles and prophets. Their teachings are based on God’s Law of love—God’s way of cooperation, unselfish giving and serving. But this present world has been built on a different foundation. The civilization of this world was founded nearly 6,000 years ago in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, influenced by Satan, rejected God’s government and chose self-government instead. They ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which represented Satan’s way of life. Consequently, this world’s civilization has been built on the foundation of sin! And so it was that at the very "foundation" of this present world (Revelation 13:8), when Adam and Eve sinned, God decreed that Christ, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:36), should come and be sacrificed to pay the penalty of their sins and the sins of their descendants. This present evil world is built on a foundation of "sand" (Matthew 7:26)--on Satan’s way of vanity, covetousness, envy and jealousy, competition and strife, violence, rebellion, contention, unhappiness, suffering and death. This world is therefore doomed to crash. And as Jesus said, great shall be the fall thereof! (Matthew 7:27) The foundation of this world’s civilization is faulty because it is of Satan the devil. This is Satan’s civilization, started through Adam when he sinned. Therefore this world’s superstructure—its systems of government, law, politics, education, economics, religion and social customs—is faulty, having produced the discontent, unhappiness and strife that has led to the violence and destruction, the anguish, suffering, poverty and death in the world today. The superstructure of the building that is this world is fast crumbling and will soon be completely destroyed by God at the return of Jesus Christ!

God says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalms 127:1). Satan, not God, built this house.

God is not trying to repair this decaying and rotting civilization. Instead He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, to start anew—to begin building a totally different new structure of civilization. The new civilization will be built on God’s foundation—His way of life. As we learned in the previous lesson, God’s Church is the beginning, in "embryonic" form, of that entirely new and different building. Jesus started the new civilization and the nucleus of God’s coming government on earth when He began His Church in the first century A.D. The Church started with about 120 on the day of Pentecost A.D. 31, when its first members were begotten by the Holy Spirit. God’s Church has continued to exist through the centuries to this day. Many more have been and are now being trained to help rule in the World Tomorrow. (More about God’s training program will be covered later in this lesson.)

2. Will many nations go up to Jerusalem—the headquarters of Christ’s worldwide government—and ask to be taught His ways? Micah 4:2.Will the earth become full of the knowledge of God? Isaiah 11:9.

COMMENT: Soon mankind will begin to be taught how to live God’s way of life, with God’s religion, God’s education, God’s social customs, God’s economic, industrial and merchandising systems. The millions who have lived in this satanically influenced world and are still alive at Christ’s return will be taught the knowledge of God. His truth will be taught throughout the Millennium. Eventually, the whole earth will be following God’s way. But who will teach the people in the World Tomorrow? Certainly not the educators and theologians of this world!

Called to Become Rulers and Teachers

Jesus is coming again to restore the rule of God on this earth and to teach the way of salvation to mankind. But Christ will not rule and teach all by Himself.

1. Exactly what will Spirit-born Sons of God do for a thousand years? Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 3:21;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:4,last part; Daniel 7:27.Will many be mayors over cities? Luke 19:16-19.

COMMENT: The Bible plainly shows that those who will be born into God's Family at the first resurrection (which includes all Spirit-begotten saints of God through the centuries) will rule this earth's mortals under Jesus Christ! But some doubt whether they could ever rule, while others have no desire to rule whatsoever. (Be sure to read Mr. Armstrong's article on page 9. [see end. Editor]) Perhaps you have thought: "I don't want to rule in the World Tomorrow. I just want to serve God." The problem is that few people have ever really understood what it means to serve.

2. Did Jesus explain the difference between the kings in God's coming Kingdom, and the kings or rulers of this present world? Mark 10:42-45.

COMMENT: Rulers in God's Family will not be like most of this civilization's rulers. They will not be harsh dictators. Those occupying positions of rulership in the World Tomorrow will be servants, having opportunity to do great good in truly SERVING mankind by governing God's way!

God's world will be built on a completely new foundation—His way of life, which is the way of His Law of love. The divine kings of the Family of God will be servants of God and humanity. Each divine ruler will serve his subjects by ruling in genuine love and concern (1 John 4:16), never acting selfishly. They will rule for the benefit of others, not themselves!

Yes, they will have the power to stabilize the world and enforce peace when necessary, which will be especially needed at the beginning of the Millennium. They will also have the compassion required to help the survivors of the Great Tribulation—to heal them, teach them the causes of the evils of the world they lived in, and teach them God's way to peace, happiness and salvation.

3. In addition to being rulers, will the Sons of God also be priests? Revelation 1:6;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:6.What is the function of a priest? Malachi 2:7.

COMMENT: Just as ancient Israel's priests taught God's way, Spirit-born members of God's Family will also be teachers of God's way of life, helping to eventually bring the knowledge of the way to salvation to everyone in the World Tomorrow. In addition to being the Supreme King over all nations, Christ will also be the Supreme Educator. To bring mankind to repentance, Christ will reeducate the world to God's way of life—the way of God's Law of love—so the people may, of their own free will, decide to follow His way.

Reeducating mankind to God's way of life will receive top priority. Under the direct supervision of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God will restore the laws and rule of God to the entire earth. As the world becomes reeducated, people will begin to experience the blessings that result from obeying God's Law of love. There will be peace, cooperation, vibrant health, abundance and joy. And the whole world will come to understand God's purpose and master plan for mankind. But God will not begin saving the entire world until He first has teachers trained to help Him teach the way of

salvation. As we learned in the previous lesson, God will not save millions until He first has thousands of teachers. This is why God is training the thousands He has called into His Church today.

While on the earth, Christ was a teacher, as well as a messenger and announcer of the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. He personally instructed His apostles in the way of God. He then commissioned them to teach others what they were taught (Matthew 28:19-20). Those whom God has called to be members of His Church and who have been taught by His ministers down through the ages will have been trained to become rulers and teachers during the Millennium!

True Christians today should have a burning desire to bring God's way of life to the entire world—to teach God's wonderful way to peace, joy and abundance. And they'll be able to do just that when Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God and they are born of God! But to qualify—to be properly trained—to serve and teach in the World Tomorrow, true Christians must learn to serve and teach now. The only reason any person is called to salvation now is to QUALIFY to help in ruling and teaching in the World Tomorrow—to help call and save those alive then. God hasn't selected certain ones today for special favors; He has called them for a special purpose—a tremendous JOB to do!

Spirit-begotten Christians are now in training for significant roles in helping to teach the world God's way and to administer the government of God for the good of all mankind. The rest of this lesson will clearly show that the Christian life is one of preparing for great service in tomorrow's world!

God's Training Program

True Christians are now in training for responsible positions in God's soon- coming world- ruling government. This training comes through living the Christian life, which is following the way of God's government! It is the training God's Spirit-begotten children must receive to administer His government in the Kingdom of God.

God Himself laid out the plan of salvation and the method by which humans may be trained and prepared to become, through the free gift of God, Spirit-born members of His ruling Kingdom. God's divine Family will be highly trained and superbly organized, having learned God's pattern of mutual teamwork and cooperation to function perfectly together. The initial steps to salvation are actually the beginning of preparation for God's Kingdom. Let's understand.

1. To eventually be born into God's ruling Family, we must first be begotten by His Spirit. What conditions must we fulfill before God will beget us as His free gift? Mark 1:14-15;Acts 3:19.

COMMENT: Repentance and belief are the first steps. Belief involves believing what Jesus taught about the coming Kingdom of God, as well as believing on Him as personal Savior. To repent means to turn around and go the opposite direction—to forsake our own way, which is contrary to God's Law, and turn to God's way, which is the way of His Law. It means rejecting our previous sinful way of life and willingly yielding ourselves to God's government.

Before we can be allowed to govern others in the World Tomorrow, God must know that we will submit to His rule now! Since there will always be a chain of authority from God the Father through Jesus Christ and on down, we will always be under authority. So learning to rule begins with

submission to rule.

2. What is the next step toward one day becoming a member of God's ruling Family? Acts 2:38.

COMMENT: Baptism is the outward symbol of our faith in Christ as our Savior, and of our turning from our past life of sin to a life of obedience to God. It symbolizes our rejection of Satan's way—the way of this human civilization he has inspired—and turning our allegiance and loyalty to God and His soon-coming Kingdom.

Baptism and the laying on of hands of a minister of God for the receipt of the Holy Spirit also shows our recognition of, and submission to, the authority God has placed in the called and chosen ministers of His Church. And through the consequent begettal of God's Spirit, we become part of His government- in- training—His Kingdom in embryo, which is His Church (1 Corinthians 12:13).

3. What is the next step in God's training program for rulership in His Kingdom? 2 Peter 3:18;2 Peter 1:5-11.

COMMENT: Upon our receipt of God's free gift of the Holy Spirit, we have been begotten of God. But we are only spiritual embryos, not yet born again as God Beings—not yet developed for the purpose God has called us, not yet trained to be divine rulers and teachers in His Kingdom. Spiritual growth—character development as a result of obedience to God—must occur within us to become properly trained!

God has supreme spiritual character. He is holy, righteous and perfect. We, to be actually born of Him—born into His ruling Family as His divine children—must be changed not only from human flesh and blood to divine spirit, but from our sinful human nature into God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), which reflects His holy, perfect character (1 Peter 1:16;Matthew 5:48).

God's spiritual character must be in the process of development in us throughout our Christian lives!

What, precisely, is the character God wants His begotten children to be developing? It is a combination of knowledge, attitude and action: the knowledge of what God defines as right as opposed to wrong—knowledge learned by studying God's Word—and the desire and actual DOING of the right, despite temptation to do wrong.

Godly character is the possession and practice of love, patience, mercy, faith, kindness, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-restraint and right self-direction. This kind of character involves knowledge, wisdom, purpose and ability, all properly controlled and developed through independent choice.

Holy, righteous character is something that is developed only through experience. Experience requires time and circumstances. Therefore God allows the time and circumstances which enable us to develop this character. But this is not our character. It is actually the character of God- holy, righteous character—motivated by Him, inspired by Him, and built by Him in us through our willing obedience to His Law.

4. In what one word can God’s character be summed up? 1 John 4:16.And exactly what is God’s part in building His character in Spirit-begotten Christians? Romans 5:5;Romans 13:10.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit, which the Father freely gives to those who repent, believe and are baptized, enables God’s children to understand the Word of God—the foundation for character development. It also supplies the spiritual love and faith needed to obey God’s Law of love, which is the basis of His government. But God’s Spirit does not force one to obey Him. Character cannot be forced upon people. It can be developed only through willing, voluntary choice—by those God calls to be Christians (John 6:44)actively choosing to be led by God’s Spirit throughout their mortal lives (Romans 8:14). That is the spiritual training that prepares us for rulership in the Kingdom of God! And when we are born of God at the resurrection, we will be perfect as God is, for God will have developed in us, with our yielding, perfect character. It will then by nature be established in us forever (1 John 3:9). We will then be ready to assist Christ as holy and righteous co-rulers in the World Tomorrow.

5. Jesus Christ overcame the temptations of Satan the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). He was severely tempted, yet through the power of God’s Spirit, He resisted and overcame Satan, and remained faithful to God and His way until death. Must Christians, to be able to assist Christ, also overcome? Revelation 3:21.

COMMENT: Jesus had to qualify to replace this world’s present ruler. He, functioning as a human being, had to resist and overcome the intense temptations of the devil. And all who are called by the Father to rule with Christ when He restores God’s government on earth must also qualify to rule—must turn from Satan’s way, resist and overcome his temptations. We must strive to root out Satan’s attitude and way, and learn to obey God’s Law of love, which is the way of His government.

Christ resisted all evil influences perfectly because He had the will and full measure of God’s Spirit (John 3:34). Though we do not have the fullness of God’s Spirit now, we can, with the help of the measure of the Spirit God grants us, begin to resist and overcome Satan, this world and our own carnal nature.

Through the process of overcoming the sinful pulls and impulses of the flesh, the world and the devil, and submitting to God and His way, spiritual character is being developed. We are yielding to God to build within us His very character. Thus we are preparing and qualifying to rule and teach the nations with Jesus Christ! But no one can overcome for us. No one can produce spiritual works for us. It requires putting forth effort on our part, together with the power of God’s Holy Spirit, to become the spiritually minded and motivated persons God can use in His Kingdom.

How Responsibilities Will Be Determined As our Savior and elder brother—"the firstborn among many brethren"— Jesus Christ has already qualified for the highest office under God the Father in the World Tomorrow. No one else can ever receive the position of authority the Father has promised to Him in the government of God.

Certain other individuals have also been promised particular positions of responsibility in God’s Kingdom. King David will rule over the 12 tribes of the reunited nation of Israel (Ezekiel 37:21-22,Ezekiel 37:24). Each of the 12 apostles will rule over one of the tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:27-28). And God has alluded to other positions of rulership for other overcomers who have

lived before us and are to be in His Kingdom (Hebrews 11:4-40). They have already been trained and will be given responsibilities in God’s ruling Family, though God has not revealed what their specific positions will be. In the Kingdom or Family of God there will be various positions of responsibility, for an entirely new civilization must be built on earth— built this time to God’s specifications. It will take many different, vital jobs to recreate world society as it ought to be.

You, if you are a Spirit-begotten child of God, are now being judged for your future job in God’s Kingdom (1 Peter 4:17). You shall be rewarded with an office in God’s government according to your works in this life! Let’s thoroughly understand this important principle.

1. How does God judge true Christians? 1 Peter 1:17;Romans 2:5-10.

COMMENT: Everyone has works—either good or bad. Those who do good works will receive good rewards. Those who do evil works—who commit SIN (1 John 3:4)--will be punished, unless their evil works are repented of and covered by the blood of Christ. Note that our works determine our rewards, not whether we receive eternal life—that is a free gift from God for which we cannot work. But unrepentant sinners will receive the "wages"—payment or reward—for sin which they have earned—DEATH for all eternity! (Romans 6:23.) Let’s be sure we understand the meaning of the word "works" as used in the Bible. The word works is translated from the Greek ergon and means deeds, actions, business. The Bible uses this word primarily in two ways, and there is a vast difference between the two. When joined with "law," as "the works of the law" (primarily in Romans and Galatians), it refers to the hard work required in performing the rituals of the law of Moses. These rituals involved repetitive physical labor. These laborious physical rituals, or "works of the law," were a substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit, and were in force only until Christ’s death. But where the word "works" appears alone, it usually refers to acts of righteousness or of evil—that is, the good works of keeping God’s spiritual Law (Psalms 119:172)or the evil works of disobedience (Colossians 1:21). In this lesson we are concerned with spiritual "works" (righteous conduct), not rituals of the law of Moses.

2. What will Christ bring with Him when He returns? Revelation 22:12.Who will be rewarded then? Revelation 11:18.Will the reward be according to each person’s works? Revelation 22:12;Matthew 16:27;Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 3:21.

COMMENT: When the glorified Christ returns to earth to rule all nations as King of kings, He will assign positions of authority in His government (the "reward") to those who are freely "saved" by His grace—those who have, through grace, received God’s gift of eternal life by a resurrection or change to immortality at His Second Coming.

However, most professing Christians confuse the "reward of the saved" with eternal life. Eternal life is a gift, not a reward. The Bible clearly defines both.

3. Can we "earn" eternal life? Romans 6:23;Ephesians 2:8-9.Yet what must we do if we expect to receive God’s gift of eternal life? Matthew 19:16-19.

COMMENT: A "gift" is something granted as a favor, something given freely. God’s gift of eternal life comes by His grace and favor. It is unmerited. There is absolutely nothing we can do to "earn" it. If it were earned it would not be a gift.

However, God has set certain terms or conditions which must be met before He will give us immortality. Compliance with these conditions does not "earn" eternal life, but noncompliance will result in death! (1 Corinthians 6:9-10;Romans 6:23;Revelation 21:8.) God will not give eternal life to anyone who insists on living Satan's way.

What are God's conditions? As we saw earlier, they include: repentance, belief, baptism, and obedience to God—in other words, cooperation with His plan of salvation.

Those who are given immortality at Christ's return will receive a reward in addition to the free gift of eternal life. The "reward of the saved" is not eternal life, but rulership with Jesus Christ over the nations of this earth! But not all positions of rulership will be equal. How will God decide which of His Spirit-born children will be given which positions in His ruling Family? Let's notice several parables of Christ that explain this.

4. Should Christians constantly be using Godly Holy Spirit to produce much spiritual "fruit"? John 15:1-5,John 15:8, John 15:16.

COMMENT: Using an example of a grapevine and its branches, Jesus says He is the vine and Christians are the branches. The branches do not join themselves to the vine—receive God's Holy Spirit—by their own efforts or "works." It is the Father's doing (John 6:44;John 17:9,John 17:11; Acts 2:38-39)--His GIFT. It comes by GRACE. But once joined on, with the sap flowing from the vine into the branches (a picture of Christ's Spirit flowing into and empowering us), we must produce spiritual fruit throughout our lives. If we don't, then the Father will remove us from the vine (verse 2, first part)--cut us off from Christ—and ultimately cast us into the lake of fire! (Verse 6.) 5. Does Jesus' parable of the sower show that some bring forth more "fruit" than others? Matthew 13:23.

COMMENT: The Spirit of God is given to us so we can produce good fruit. The fruit is simply the result of following God's way of life—of keeping God's Law. We must be doers of the Law, not hearers only (Romans 2:13). This doing produces fruit—develops the spiritual character of God—trains us for responsible positions in God's Kingdom. But one's particular job will be dependent on how well he did during his training period—upon the amount of fruit (good works) produced during his Christian life!

Now notice the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:1-48. It shows that the degree of reward each Christian will receive will be according to how much he grew and overcame spiritually in this life—how much good fruit he produced by his effort and the power of Christ's Spirit in him. In this parable Christ pictures Himself as a nobleman going to a far country (heaven) to receive a kingdom and to return to earth (Luke 19:11-12). But before leaving, He gave an equal amount of money to each of His ten servants (Luke 19:13).

6. Having obtained the Kingdom and returned, how will Christ judge His servants? Luke 19:15.

COMMENT: These servants represent Christians (1 Corinthians 7:22)to whom God has given His Holy Spirit. Each "pound" (a unit of money symbolizing spiritual value) corresponds to the beginning unit of God's Spirit we receive after baptism. God has given each Christian His Spirit to be USED to serve others, overcome, develop spiritual character, and help accomplish the work of God's Church. At His return, Christ will call His servants to see how much each "had gained by

trading." Christ will want to see how much each Christian grew spiritually!

7. Will each servant’s reward be proportional to his growth—his spiritual overcoming and godly character development? 1 Corinthians 7:16-19.

COMMENT: The Christian life is a "spiritual school"—our training to be a ruler, priest and teacher in God’s Kingdom. But some learn more and accomplish more spiritual works with the Spirit they have been given than others. Some overcome and develop more spiritual character than others, producing more spiritual fruit. Thus, in the Kingdom or Family of God, each will receive greater or lesser positions of responsibility based upon the degree of his or her spiritual overcoming and how much of God’s character was developed in this life. Each will be rewarded "according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). As explained before, our good works cannot gain us entrance into God’s Kingdom of immortals. We are born into the Kingdom of God by His grace. But once we are born into the God Family, our spiritual "works" during our Christian life DO determine what office, position, rank or degree of glory we shall have! So it is not a matter of grace or works, but grace and works!

Turn to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:1-46, Matthew 25:14-30. This parable illustrates the fact that we will be rewarded according to our works. But it also illustrates another aspect—God’s complete fairness in rewarding us, taking into consideration our own natural limitations.

8. In this parable Christ compared Himself to a man traveling to a far country (Matthew 25:14). In what way did the man divide up his goods? Matthew 25:15.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated "talent" is talanton, which was a measure by which gold or silver was weighed.

9. This time are all the quantities equal, or were amounts given according to each servant’s natural physical aptitude or ability? Same verse.

COMMENT: These units of money, like the pounds in Luke 19:1-48, symbolize the Holy Spirit given to each Christian (servant). But they also picture spiritual gifts given to each based on his own natural ability! God knows some have more hereditary ability, greater innate aptitudes, more personality or more physical strength than others. Some also have more education and better opportunities in life.

10. In this parable, what did the servants do with the money given to them before Christ came back to "reckon" with them—to judge their works? Luke 19:16-19. How were the first two judged? Luke 19:20-23.

COMMENT: In the parable of the pounds, all ten of Christ’s servants (Christians) appear to have had equal ability, and each was given an equal portion of Spirit from God at the start. But in the parable of the talents, God gave spiritual gifts to each, at the start of his Christian life, according to his natural ability. To one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another only one—according to the natural ability of each. The person who was given five talents doubled his spiritual stock-in-trade. Likewise, although the man with two produced less in number than the one with five, he also doubled what he started with. He did as well in proportion to his ability!

Consequently we find it revealed that to whom much is given, much is required; and to whom little is given, less is required (Luke 12:48). In other words, God judges each Christian according to how well he overcomes, yields to God, develops and grows spiritually, according to what he has to do with!

11. Does this parable reveal that each servant who is faithful "over a few things"—that is, over his or her limited abilities and opportunities of this life—will be rewarded with "many things" when Christ returns? Matthew 25:21,Matthew 25:23. Isn't it clearly rulership that Christ promised? Same verses.

COMMENT: We learn to responsibly rule for the good of ourselves and others in the World Tomorrow by learning to better manage the affairs, responsibilities and powers in our control today, no matter how small they may presently be. There are many opportunities to grow and develop right on the job, at school or in the home—in whatever circumstance we may find ourselves.

12. What will happen to those who fail to overcome and grow even a little—who fail to increase their spiritual usefulness and effectiveness? Luke 19:20-24;Matthew 25:24-30.

COMMENT: The one who did nothing with his spiritual gift—the pound or talent—corresponds to a Christian who did not overcome and grow spiritually. He developed no character.

These parables show that the Christian who does not grow spiritually will lose out! He could be compared to one who thought he did not need to overcome spiritually and grow in spiritual character. He thought he was "already saved." He didn't believe any "works" were necessary! By doing nothing, he lost not only the reward, but he lost out on the free gift of eternal life as well because he produced no spiritual fruit. He failed utterly in God's REAL PURPOSE for his life.

God freely gives us salvation so we may serve others. If we do not prepare now to serve in God's coming Kingdom, we may have taken away from us even the salvation we thought we had! Are You in Training to Rule?

Why will Abraham, David and the apostles be assigned positions of responsibility in the Kingdom of God? Simply because they prepared and qualified for those positions during their mortal lives. They learned to rule by submitting to God's rule. They were willing to do whatever God said. They grew in the holy, righteous character of God.

Christ will not establish world rule until He has first trained His assistants. God will not entrust the incomprehensibly great powers of His ruling Family to those who did not, in this human life, strive to obey Him and learn to properly control the small powers we all have at our disposal. God wants to know that we would use His incredible power in love and self-control and according to His will for the good of all under our authority!

1. By what great principle can a person of ordinary ability and humble opportunity qualify for far greater responsibility in the Kingdom of God? Luke 16:10.Also notice Luke 16:11-12.

COMMENT: We learn to rule by being faithful—conscientious and honest— in whatever we do as we strive to put into practice the principles of God's Law we learn from His Word. Even the person who considers himself or herself as having only a little ability and natural talent can be trained to

rule—SERVE—in God’s Kingdom! But can that really qualify you to rule a city—to tackle the complex administrative, organizational and personal problems that come up when several thousand families live together? Yes, it can!

God does not need to see you actually ruling ten cities to determine whether you know how to apply and observe His Law. He can see, by the simple decisions you make every day in your life, whether you will obey Him or go the way of this present evil world. The decisions required to live God’s way are really very simple—they are basically a matter of saying "yes" or "no" to God’s Law. The way you treat your wife, respect your husband, love your children and your friends shows Christ what kind of a ruler you would be. Are you short-tempered, hard to get along with, rebellious, uncooperative, unfair?

Christ needs to know that now, before He entrusts you with a major responsibility over many people. The Kingdom of God is going to bring peace to the world, not more strife. Those who will rule must show God now that they are learning the way of peace.

God wants us to learn to rule ourselves before He gives us authority over others!

What about finances? Would you handle the finances of a city like so many rulers today, and enrich yourself at the expense of others? God can tell by the way you handle your employer’s money and the time your employer pays you for, by your attitude toward taxes you must "render unto Caesar," and by what you do with God’s tithe. As Jesus said, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:12.) If you learn to be faithful and loyal in the small things of life, God knows that you will be that way if given much greater responsibility!

Every Christian who is growing and developing spiritually also has his heart completely in the work God has given His Church to accomplish. Our "works" include our part in doing God’s work—getting the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the whole world as a witness (Matthew 24:14;Matthew 28:19-20), thus preparing the way for Christ’s coming. God’s Spirit-begotten children are His instruments in fulfilling His great commission to His Church in the end time!

Years of experience have shown that those who are self-centered, caring nothing for the work of God’s Church, not having enough outgoing concern to want to help get Christ’s message out to this blinded, deceived, dying world, eventually fall away. Those who center their whole "Christian" life on themselves, whose hearts are not in or concerned about this great outgoing worldwide work of God, shrivel up spiritually and fall by the wayside!

Just as the Church has two primary commissions--1) to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world; and 2) to help the Spirit-begotten members grow spiritually as part of their training for that Kingdom—so the members also have two primary missions: 1) to actively support the Church in preaching the Gospel; and 2) to willingly and actively participate in God’s training program for eternal rulership as Spirit-born members of the universe-ruling Kingdom of God!

Ask God daily for the understanding and wisdom to rightly use and direct the powers, abilities and responsibilities that are now yours so you can be a faithful and productive servant of God.

Strive to be faithful over what God has already given you, so that one day Christ can say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over

MUCH..." (Matthew 25:21,RSV). This life is our time of training. It is only those who are obedient to the authority of God's government now—who learn its laws, who overcome every false way, who grow in God's holy, righteous character, becoming more like Him in preparation to being born into His Family and ruling with Christ—who then will be assigned a position of rulership.

Yes, you were born with the potential to be an eternal king—to RULE in the Kingdom of God! Your awesome destiny, once born of God, is that of helping to rule the earth, and the universe beyond, as a member of the Family of God!

It's a breathtaking, exciting, incredible calling! A glorious, wonderful future! Have you begun to walk spiritually toward that goal? Are you in training to rule?

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. God's Spirit-begotten children A. will retire for eternity in the Kingdom of God . B. will rule in heaven with Jesus Christ. C. are royal heirs to the throne of England. D. are receiving the training necessary to rule the earth with and under Christ.

2. The Kingdom of God is A. not a divine Family one can be born into. B. not the government of God administered by the ruling Family of God. C. the divine Family of God, into which Spirit-begotten Christians will be born at Christ's return. D. eternally limited to only the Father and the Son.

3. God will give offces of responsibility in His government A. to those who qualified for those positions during their training period. B. not as a reward, but as a gift. C. to those angels who refused to follow Lucifer in his rebellion. D. to all who have professed Christ.

4. The government of God's ruling Family is A. Christian democracy. B. from the top down—like His instructions for human family government. C. a tyrannical dictatorship. D. not based on any law.

5. Which one of the following statements does NOT accurately describe an aspect of the Millennium? A. The Kingdom of God will rule all nations on earth. B. Christ will be King of the world. C. Satan will be put away where he can do no harm. D. Satan will still broadcast his attitudes of sin to all mortals.

6. The world as we know it A. is built on the solid foundation of God's Law. B. is Satan's world because it is built on a foundation of sin. C. does not need to be rebuilt from the bottom up. D. is God's world.

7. This world’s civilization A. was founded by Adam and Eve when they sinned. B. is influenced by Satan. C. will be replaced by God with a totally new civilization after Christ’s return. D. All of the above.

8. Godsent His ownSon to earth to A. strengthen civilization’s foundations. B. repairearth’s decaying civilization. C. begin building a new and totally different structure of civilization by founding His Church. D. All of the above.

9. Which one of. the following statements does NOT describe the future rulers of the World Tomorrow? A. Spirit-born members in God’s Family. B.Serving and helping humanity, always ruling in love. C. Qualified to rule by having learned to serve during their mortal lives. D. Self-serving, ruling for their own gain and benefit.

10. In the Millennium, Christ will teach everyone the way of salvation A. by forcing His truth upon them. B. by pleading with them to give their hearts to Him. C. with the help of thousands of trained teachers. D. with the help of this world’s educators and theologians.

11. Everyone God has called to salvation now A. has been called to qualify to help rule and teach in the World Tomorrow. B. does not need to learn to serve and teach while still mortal. C. is exceptionally gifted in governmental administration. D. is automatically given eternal life.

12. The Christian’s preparation to become a part of God’s ruling Family A. has nothing to do with living the Christian life. B. includes belief, repentance, baptism, and living the Christian way of life. C. includes relying on God’s grace without any need to obey Him. D. includes the obtaining of a college degree in political science.

13. Which one of the following statements is FALSE? A. Learning to rule in the World Tomorrow begins with submission to God’s rule now. B. God will not allow us to rule in His Kingdom unless we prove our willingness to be ruled by Him now. C. We will no longer be under authority once born into the ruling Family of God. D. There will always be a chain of authority from God the Father, through Jesus Christ, and on down.

14. Spiritual growth, which is essential to the training of the spiritual leaders of the World Tomorrow , A. involves the knowledge of what God defines as right as opposed to wrong. B. involves righteous character development through obedience to God’s Law. C. must continue throughout one’s Christian life. D. All of the above.

15. God will develop His holy, righteous character in Spirit-begotten Christians A. because of their natural goodness. B. who resist the keeping of His Law. C. only as they willingly and actively choose to be led by God’s Spirit. D. by forcing it upon them.

16. All who are called by the Father to rule with Christ when He restores God’s government on earth A. must turn from Satan’s attitude and way of life, and learn to live by God’s Law of love. B. must overcome with human effort alone. C. Both A and B. D. are not being judged for their future responsibilities.

17. How is a Christian judged for his future job in God’s Kingdom? A. Simply by accepting Christ as his Savior. B. According to his works in this life. C. Certainly not by his "works." D. By the Church.

18. God will give His gift of eternal life to A. everyone who desires it. b. those who earn it. C. those who meet certain conditions laid down in His Word. D. those who just profess Christ. 19. The "reward of the saved" is A. rulership with Jesus Christ. B. the gift of eternal life. C. heaven. D. not earned.

20. Which one of the following statements does NOT accurately represent the meaning of the parables of the pounds and talents? A. Christians will be given offices of responsibility in God’s Kingdom based upon how much spiritual "fruit" (good works) they produced while mortal. B. God’s Spirit-begotten children will be given jobs according to their spiritual growth and overcoming in this life. C. God’s servants will be rewarded according to how much of His character is developed in them before Christ returns. D. These parables have nothing to do with Christians being rewarded.

21. God expects all Christians to grow and overcome spiritually A. in equal amounts regardless of their natural ability. B. only after they are resurrected. C. in whatever circumstances they may find themselves. D. only if they are naturally very talented.

22. A Christian who does nothing with God’s Spirit—the "pound" or "talent"—he’s been given A. has failed utterly in God’s real purpose for his life. B. will still be rewarded. C. cannot be blamed for not accomplishing anything because he wasn’t given much to work with. D. would make an effective ruler in God’s Kingdom.

23. God can know how well you would rule in His Kingdom A. by giving you opportunities to work in the governments of this world. B. only after He has given you such responsibility in His Kingdom. C. by seeing if you are obedient to Him in the decisions of everyday life, and in how you relate to others. D. just from seeing whether you pay your tithes faithfully.

24. Every Christian who is growing spiritually A. is concentrating on developing himself to the exclusion of all else. B. is wholeheartedly supporting the work God has given His Church to do. C. is not really interested in helping to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness. D. does not really have his heart in the work of God’s Church.

25. Those whom God has called into His Church have been called to A. support the publishing and preaching of the Gospel to the world with their prayers, tithes and offerings. B. grow in His righteous character. C. be trained now to become rulers and teachers in the Kingdom of God. D. All of the above.

Lesson 21

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 21 Is This The Only Day Of Salvation?

Modern Christianity teaches that there are only two classes of people—the LOST and the SAVED. But what about those who die never having heard the name of Christ? Would God be fair to condemn them? IT IS commonly believed that God is desperately trying to save the world now. That He is struggling with Satan to save all mankind now, while the devil is feverishly trying to keep as many as he can "lost" forever. If this is true, who do you think is winning?

If God and Satan are in a titanic battle for human lives, and if God is as all-powerful as the Bible reveals, then why is five-sixths of the world non-Christian today? And why have thousands of millions already died without ever having had a chance to be saved?

False Assumptions!

Many sermons have been preached based on the premise that "there is no middle ground. Either you are this minute saved, or you’re a lost soul!"

Many people have grieved over dead loved ones who had never made a profession of Christ. Perhaps over one who was a terrible sinner; perhaps over one who lived a "good" life, but never became an active church member. Still others grieve because they are not sure whether some loved one died "saved." The teaching that a person is either saved or lost comes from the assumption that God is out to save the world now—that the mission of the Church is to save mankind now—that this is the "only day of salvation," and that this time is just about over. These assumptions are all absolutely false!

Why Most Have Not Understood The vast majority of people have never heard the true Gospel—the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. And of those who have heard it, most have not understood that message because Satan has deceived them (Revelation 12:9). Therefore, they never had a chance to understand and be saved! Are they all, through no fault of their own, "lost" forever?

Shocking as it may sound, God does not intend for everyone to understand His truth at this time! If He did, they would understand!

Many think that Jesus spoke in parables to make His meaning clearer. This was not the reason. He spoke in parables to hide His real meaning so most of His hearers would not understand. After Jesus had spoken the parable of the sower, He plainly told His disciples whom He had called, "It is not given" to the rest (those who had not then been called) to understand the truth about the Kingdom of God. They were not permitted to understand! (Mark 4:10-12;Matthew 13:10-13.)

God has allowed the vast majority of humanity to be blind to His truth. He has allowed Satan to deceive the whole world. It is God’s purpose and plan that, until Christ returns, only those whom He specially calls (John 6:44,John 6:65) can understand the true way of salvation. As we learned

in the previous lesson, the future members of God’s Family will be the kings, priests, teachers and administrators in His soon-coming world-ruling government. Only a comparatively few are now being called to fill these positions. They are receiving the training necessary to prepare them to teach all mankind when God’s Kingdom is set up, with world-ruling headquarters in Jerusalem.

Everyone to Be Called

God reveals in His inspired Word—the Holy Bible—that those He has not yet called have not lost their opportunity for salvation. God is not in the process of saving everyone now.

After Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, He will then begin to teach the way of salvation to millions. They will have their calling and opportunity to understand God’s truth and be born into His Family during the Millennium. But what about the multiple thousands of millions who have already died without ever hearing or understanding the way of salvation? After the Millennium, they will be resurrected to mortal life and given their opportunity to understand God’s truth, to be begotten by God’s Spirit, to grow in His character, and to become Spirit-born members of His ruling Family.

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Everyone will ultimately be called and given an opportunity to receive salvation! God is absolutely fair! The truth about this important subject is plainly revealed in the pages of your Bible. So be sure to look up and read each verse given in answer to the questions. Don’t just read this lesson—prove the truth from the Bible. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Let’s begin this eye-opening and encouraging study of God’s Word.

LESSON 21 Why This World Is Blinded

God, the Ruler of the entire universe, assigned the archangel known as Lucifer to administer God’s government on this earth. But Lucifer rebelled against the government of God, and so God changed his name to Satan, which means adversary, competitor, enemy. But God has not yet taken away Satan’s throne of authority. According to God’s plan, He has allowed Satan to continue ruling the earth until his successor, Jesus Christ, is officially installed by God in that office of authority. In previous studies we learned that Satan subtly deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. Satan did not tell Eve: "Choose my government and my way of vanity and self-centeredness, and reject God." He tempted her with the beauty of the forbidden tree, appealed to her intellectual vanity, implied that God wasn’t fair to withhold certain knowledge, and told her she wouldn’t die (Genesis 3:1-6), assuring her she was already an immortal soul dwelling in a material body. Eve was thoroughly deceived into believing Satan and disbelieving God. She ate the forbidden fruit and gave some of it to her husband to eat also. Thus Adam willingly, but not willfully, disobeyed God. When Adam took the forbidden fruit, he took to himself the authority to determine the spiritual knowledge of good and evil. He appropriated the prerogative of deciding what is good and evil—what is right and wrong—what is righteousness and what is sin. But Adam did not have this ability of himself.

Thus the first human disbelieved and disobeyed God, choosing to go his own way and do his own thing. When Adam chose to reject God’s authority, he rejected revealed spiritual knowledge from God. He chose instead to follow Satan’s self-oriented way of life—his way of "get" as opposed to God’s way of "give." Consequently, all mankind, except for a few God has specially chosen to call

out of Satan’s world, has been deceived by Satan for almost 6,000 years.

Stated another way, our first parents were "kidnapped" by Satan, and followed the way of life of the kidnapper rather than their potential spiritual Father, whom they disbelieved and disobeyed. By following Satan’s way and rejecting God, Adam in effect chose Satan as the "god" of mankind. And the Bible shows that God has allowed Satan to influence and deceive mankind ever since Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Let’s review a few of the scriptures proving these facts.

1. Is Satan the god of this world? 2 Corinthians 4:4.Has he blinded people to God’s truth? Same verse. Is Satan also the prince of the power of the air? Ephesians 2:2.Does he influence, or "work in," the disobedient? Same verse. Has he indeed deceived the world? Revelation 12:9.

COMMENT: Satan, the "prince of the power of the air," influences mankind by "broadcasting" his moods and attitudes of vanity and selfishness to the human spirit in each individual. Humans unwittingly accept and express these attitudes as their own. "Human nature" is actually Satan’s nature expressed in humans. Because they have been deceived, they are unaware of this spiritual broadcasting by Satan, and do not even know that they have been deceived.

2. Do true Christians belong to Christ and God? Mark 9:41;1 Corinthians 3:23;1 Corinthians 6:20.Is that because God, through Christ had to "buy" them back? Matthew 20:28;Colossians 1:14;1 Timothy 2:6;1 Peter 1:18-19.

COMMENT: "Redeem" (from which the word "redemption" comes) means to recover ownership of something that had been lost. If we are Christians, Christ has redeemed us—"bought us back," so to speak. His sacrifice allows us, with God’s help, to cease being the kidnapped children of Satan, and become the Spirit-begotten children of God! The fact that Christ had to pay a ransom (His life) to buy back those who are now His proves that we all have belonged to Satan! (See John 8:44;1 John 3:8;Romans 6:16.) 3. What did God warn Adam that the penalty of sin would be? Genesis 2:17.

COMMENT: Adam and Eve sinned when they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had foreseen that possibility. But He could not suspend the penalty He had plainly said would follow disobedience. So how would God rescue His potential spiritual children from the kidnapper—Satan the devil? By decreeing at the very "foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8)--this present civilization based on Satan’s way, which began when Adam sinned—that He would send His future Son, Jesus Christ, to live without sin and pay the penalty of man’s sins.

It was also determined by God at that time that all of Adam’s children should die: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). But how could a man be judged after he has died? We’ll learn the answer as we continue studying the Bible with this lesson!

4. Did Satan offer to give Christ rulership of all the kingdoms of the world if He would worship him? Matthew 4:8-9.Did Christ acknowledge that Satan is the ruler of this world? John 14:30.

COMMENT: This and the other verses we have read clearly show that Satan is the ruler of this present evil world. But he retains that power only by God’s express permission. God has assigned Satan 6,000 years in which to rule over mankind. When that time expires, Christ will forcibly intervene in world affairs and reestablish the government of God on earth. He will then rule the

world for the next 1,000 years. Thus God’s plan spans a period of one prophetic "week," since a day is as a thousand years with God, and a thousand years as a day (2 Peter 3:8).

God has said to Satan, in effect: "Six ‘days’ shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh ‘day’ is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Exodus 20:9-10). The first six days of this prophetic week God has turned over to Satan, and given him free reign to influence and deceive.

Satan’s work is a labor of deception—of deceiving mankind—of turning God’s truth upside down—causing honest, sincere people to accept a counterfeit for the genuine—deceiving people to sin. And how successfully he has worked at his occupation for nearly 6,000 years!

We are now nearing the end of Satan’s six millennial days of work. And the coming seventh millennial day shall be the Sabbath of the Lord God. That "day" will not belong to Satan. It belongs to God. In it, Satan shall not do any work. He will be chained, restrained, and thrown into the symbolic "bottomless pit" (Revelation 20:1-3). He will not be allowed to deceive anyone during the Millennium. When Christ returns to earth, He will seize rulership from the archdeceiver who has deceived and swayed humanity. Christ will then restrain the builder and ruler of this world’s civilization and bind him for 1,000 years!

Jesus Hid the Truth About Salvation! When Jesus Christ came to earth nearly 2,000 years ago, it was not to set up His Kingdom (John 18:36). Christ did not, at that time, come to restrain Satan from deceiving the world.

Contrary to what many have been taught, neither did Christ come to earth the first time to call everyone to salvation. Rather, He came to deliver His Father’s message—the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. That message included salvation through Christ. But Jesus did not try to get everyone to believe this wonderful message!

Notice the New Testament proof that Christ did not try to convert everyone.

1. Did Jesus speak to the multitudes in parables to make His meaning clearer, or to hide it so the public would not understand? Matthew 13:10-15;Mark 4:11-12.Did He speak to the general public only in parables? Matthew 13:34.Was this because it was not the time for most to be forgiven their sins and converted? Mark 4:12.

2. Did Christ explain the meaning of His parables only to His disciples? Mark 4:1-2,Mark 4:1-11; Matthew 13:10-11,Matthew 13:16.

COMMENT: Christ preached the Father’s Gospel to the public as a witness. But He worked with only a few specially called and chosen disciples, or students. They were the ones whom He really wanted to understand the truth about salvation and His coming government on earth.

3. Did Jesus often try to avoid crowds of people? Matthew 5:1;Matthew 8:18;Matthew 13:36;Mark 3:13;John 5:13;John 7:10.Did He often tell those whom He had healed not to tell anyone who healed them? Matthew 8:4;Matthew 9:30;Matthew 12:16;Mark 5:35,Mark 5:41-43;Mark 7:35-36.Did He want everyone to know who He really was? Matthew 16:20;Mark 3:12.

COMMENT: For most of His ministry, Jesus avoided publicity. It was not God’s will for everyone to understand who Jesus was. Spiritual understanding will not be granted to the world until Christ removes Satan from earth’s throne!

4. After three and one-half years of Christ’s preaching, and after His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, how many disciples remained with Him? Acts 1:2-4,Acts 1:15.

COMMENT: The New Testament Church of God was started with only about 120 disciples. Only after they had been trained could they teach and train others. Christ at first needed only a few teachers to teach others to become teachers, so He called only a few at that time.

Remember, one can come to Christ only if God the Father specially selects and calls him (John 6:44,65). But some will ask: "What about one who really wants salvation—wants to believe in Christ—is willing to truly repent and come out of this world and be led by God’s Spirit in a true commandment-keeping Christian life? Do you mean this individual cannot come to Christ unless God calls him?"

Answer: Such a person is being drawn by God, otherwise he or she would have no such desire. However, most who think they are in that category have followed a false gospel, a false teaching and are deceived. They have a false idea of what salvation is, a false concept of repentance and a false idea of what God’s way is.

5. Did God, in the Bible, tell us in advance that He would call only a few into His Church, and that His Church would continue to be small, and even persecuted? Luke 12:32;Matthew 10:16-17;Matthew 7:13-14;John 16:33;2 Timothy 3:12.

COMMENT: From Christ’s human ministry until His soon return to earth, God has called only a small minority of people. God’s Church through the centuries has continued to be small—an "embryo" of God’s new civilization yet to come. That Church, as we learned in the last lesson, is in training to rule and teach the world with and under Christ in the World Tomorrow.

What Predestination Really Is Does God know ahead of time whether an individual will be saved or lost? Has God foreordained that some would be saved, while others are destined to be lost? Does one have any choice at all regarding his or her own salvation?

"If God knows beforehand how I am going to decide," reasoned a man who was worried about the subject of predestination, "then it is all predetermined. If He knows in advance that I am to be lost, then that’s the way I’ll have to decide in the end. And since I’ll lose out anyway, why try?

"On the other hand, if God knows I’m going to repent, accept Christ and be saved, I’ll have to do it in the end anyway, whether I try or not. My ultimate fate was already predetermined—destined, or determined, in advance. And if that is so, then we simply are not free moral agents—we have nothing to say about it." The subject of predestination has often puzzled and worried many people simply because they have accepted, without question, the teachings of their religion. Let’s understand exactly what the Word of God teaches about "predestination."

1. Does the Bible say that some are "predestined" ("predestined" is the modern term) to be called now? Romans 8:28-30;Ephesians 1:11-12.Are others predestined, appointed or foreordained, to be blinded in this age? 1 Peter 2:8.

COMMENT: Predestination has nothing to do with any particular decision you will make, or your fate—it has only to do with the time of your calling—whether God calls you now or later. There is not one word in the entire Bible about anyone being predestined to be lost. God has not predestined or foreordained anyone either to accept or reject Christ—to be saved or lost. The decision we make regarding our salvation is not predetermined. God has ordained that we make our own decisions. God's purpose is that we develop His character, and character cannot be created by fiat. It must be developed through experience. And experience requires time. Although God tells us which decision we ought to make (Deuteronomy 30:19), the final decision to choose life or death for eternity is still ours! The only decision that is predetermined is God's. God has predestined some to be called at certain times for a specific purpose. The rest will be called by God to understand the way of salvation later. Predestination simply has to do with when one is called.

Jesus Christ established His Church to train the future kings and priests of God's Kingdom—to have a part in teaching the way of salvation to the masses during the Millennium. God knew far in advance that leaders, teachers, and governmental administrators would be needed for His Kingdom, so He planned ahead—predestined—that He would call some to this training, especially in this age.

2. When did God decide to call certain ones at certain times? 2 Timothy 1:9;Ephesians 1:4-5.

COMMENT: If you are one now called, God "foreknew" you before the foundation of the world, this present world order. And "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate"—to be lost? No, "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called..." (Romans 8:29-30). Not will call in the future—but called now in this age.

If you are called—if God has revealed this wonderful truth to your understanding and you are begotten by His Spirit—you are having your opportunity now—your one and only opportunity to prepare yourself to be used by Christ in the loving labor of helping to save the vast majority of mankind in the World Tomorrow!

Most Neither Finally Lost Nor Saved

1. Have all sinned and therefore earned the penalty for sin—eternal death? Romans 3:23;Romans 6:23.But did Christ, the Creator of all mankind, give His sinless life to pay that penalty in our stead? Romans 5:8-10.Can salvation come only through Christ? Acts 4:12;1 Timothy 2:5.

COMMENT: No one can come to God except through Jesus Christ. No one can have the death penalty he has incurred paid in any other way. But neither can anyone receive the benefit of Christ's payment unless he has an opportunity to accept it. No one can build God's character without His Spirit, and that Spirit is given only after repentance, belief and baptism. And God will not give immortality to anyone who has not already proven he or she will live God's way.

Millions have lived and died without any opportunity to fulfill any of these essentials. They cannot be given eternal life—they cannot yet be trusted with the awesome powers of the God Family. They are not "saved," yet neither are they finally condemned. They will have their opportunity later. But if they haven't finally lost salvation, then who has? Actually, only a very small minority. The

Bible describes two ways a person can lose salvation.

2. Will those whom God has already called to receive the knowledge of salvation be given a "second chance"—if they sin willfully? Hebrews 10:26-29;Hebrews 6:4-6.To receive this punishment, was it first necessary for them to have known God’s truth? Hebrews 10:26.

COMMENT: It is only those to whom God has revealed the knowledge of His truth who have been given a chance to understand spiritual salvation and receive eternal life. If they sin willfully after receiving that knowledge, they will not have a second chance for salvation!

There is a big difference between sinning willingly and willfully. Adam sinned willingly, but that does not mean he is condemned to perish in the lake of fire because of it. There are only a few who have sinned willfully, and they are condemned to the lake of fire!

God will forgive any sin that is repented of—even if, through weakness, temptation or habit, the sin is repeated. As long as a person’s intention, attitude and desire is to obey God, he will repent, and God will forgive him (1 John 1:9). Jesus said we ought to forgive seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:21-22). God is even more willing to forgive than that! So what is a willful or an unforgiveable sin?

If a person has been given spiritual understanding of God’s way and has experienced the blessings of that way, but decides he no longer wants it, changes his attitude, deliberately chooses a life of rebellion, despising God’s Law, then this sin is unforgiveable because he will not repent of it! God will not give eternal life to anyone who insists on living Satan’s way. "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance" (Hebrews 6:4-6,NIV).

Such people have been specially called by God and given His Spirit, yet at some point in time they purposely, knowingly, rejected it! Perhaps through bitterness, refusal to forgive others, or neglect of prayer and Bible study, they stopped allowing God to build His character in them. Like the servant who did nothing with his pound or talent, they failed in God’s purpose for them. They have become so calloused to their sins that they, no matter what God could do to try to correct them, will never want to repent.

3. Did Jesus speak of another sin that will not be forgiven by God? Mark 3:28-29;Matthew 12:31-32.What grave accusation did the scribes and Pharisees hurl at Jesus? Mark 3:22;Matthew 12:22-24.

COMMENT: To intentionally speak abusively (the meaning of the Greek word translated "blasphemy") against the Holy Spirit and attribute works of God’s Spirit to the devil is to deliberately reject the only power by which one can be converted and given salvation. It is a deliberate, premeditated, willful rejection of God and His power!

4. Now what does 2 Corinthians 6:2 have to say about a "day" of salvation? How does Isaiah 49:8,from which 2 Corinthians 6:2 is quoted, correctly state it?

COMMENT: The proper translation of the Greek of 2 Corinthians 6:2 (and the Hebrew of Isaiah 49:8)is "now is a day of salvation." If it were true that this is the only time when one may be saved,

God would not be fair, for He is now calling only a few! This age is indeed "the" day of salvation for the few God is now calling. But all others will have their "day" of salvation later!

God is indeed calling some people in this age, but the vast majority are blinded. God has purposely allowed them to be deceived by Satan. Therefore, most people simply have not had a chance to understand the truth about salvation. They have not yet had an opportunity to be saved!

"Firstfruits" Called to Salvation Now

1. When Jesus came to earth about 4,000 years after Adam had cut mankind off from God, did He say that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God would be preached to all nations during this age for the purpose of converting them? Matthew 24:14.

COMMENT: The Gospel Jesus proclaimed is to be preached in all the world only for a witness to all nations before the end of the present age—not to convert them!

Most who hear the true Gospel do not really understand it or the way to salvation. God's truth is spiritual knowledge, and spiritual knowledge cannot be transmitted naturally to a mortal human mind (1 Corinthians 2:11-14). Spiritual truth is revealed by God! None can receive it, though their ears hear the words, or their eyes see them (Matthew 13:14), except as God opens their understanding and reveals the truth to them by His Holy Spirit.

2. Even though most of mankind has not yet been called to understand God's plan of salvation, some DO understand and come to Christ. Are these people specially called by God the Father? (John 6:44,65). How are they referred to by the Apostle James? James 1:18.

COMMENT: Those now called are merely the "firstfruits" of God's plan of salvation. God has called only a few in this age—not for special favors, but for special responsibilities. They have been called to grow in God's character so they, when born into His Family, can rule righteously in the World Tomorrow. Then they will help bring salvation to every mortal during the Millennium.

3. When was the Holy Spirit first given to those called to be firstfruits? Acts 2:1-4.To whom was the Holy Spirit promised? Acts 2:39.

COMMENT: The promise was made only to those God had predestined to call. It was God, not the apostles, who added new converts to the Church (Acts 2:47). The Holy Spirit which every human needs, unites with the human spirit that is in us. It is the impregnation of God-life, which makes us the begotten but not yet born children of God's Family—heirs, but not yet inheritors.

It is the spirit of understanding, imparting to the physical brain spiritual comprehension—the ability to really understand spiritual knowledge. It is the divine love of God placed within us. It is the faith of Christ—the same faith Jesus had—now given to us. It is also the spiritual power we need to help us turn from, resist and overcome Satan's "get" way and turn to God's "give" way.

It is the power by which the few firstfruits now called may develop God's holy, righteous and perfect character, which is God's purpose for having put humanity on the earth—that God may thus reproduce Himself. When Adam chose to disobey God, he was cast out of the Garden of Eden and denied further access to the Holy Spirit and eternal life. He was spiritually kidnapped by Satan! Although the world would then be ruled by Satan for 6,000 years, God knew that this was

the best way for humans to learn their lesson.

Those who are called prior to Christ's return must, with the power of God's Spirit, overcome Satan while he is still ruling. That is not easy, but it helps them to qualify for greater positions of responsibility in the World Tomorrow. Greater character is built when one has obstacles, such as the devil's influence, to overcome.

Living in a world filled with sin also helps us learn to thoroughly hate sin (Psalms 97:10;Psalms 119:104). The results of selfishness and competition are painfully obvious to those God calls out of Satan's world.

After Christ returns and restrains Satan, a utopia will finally result that will reflect the benefits of God's way. The comparison with Satan's 6,000 years of rule will be spectacular!

All in the Millennium Will Be Called The 6,000-year sentence on Adam's world—being cut off from God—is due to end in our generation. This world, still Satan's world except for God's Church, is fast plunging into a period of great tribulation just before Christ's return.

Suddenly, when most needed, but least expected by a world cut off from God, Jesus Christ will come in supreme supernatural power and glory as King of kings. He will then marry His bride—the firstfruits of His Church, who have made themselves ready—and together they will rule the world from Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Then, after this world has been freed from Satan's rule, freed from his deceptions and spiritual influences—when this is God's world—Christ will begin to convert everyone and bring them into His eternal Family!

Millions of modern-day descendants of the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes" of Israel will have been rescued from slave labor camps. In an exodus far greater than the original deliverance of ancient Israel from Egypt (Jeremiah 16:14-15;Jeremiah 23:3,Jeremiah 3:7-8), they will be supernaturally delivered from their captors.

Many will then remember the warnings given them by God's modern-day apostle before the Great Tribulation began. Others will have been warned during the Tribulation by two witnesses (Revelation 11:3-12). They will be willing to admit that their old way of life, based on the ways of the old civilization founded by Satan, was wrong. And they will gladly accept God's way. By the millions, humans will be spiritually begotten, will grow in God's character, and be born into the Family of God all during the thousand years.

1. When Isaiah the prophet was told by God that the vast majority of Israel was blinded (Isaiah 6:10), what did he ask? Isaiah 6:11. How long did God say this spiritual blindness would last? Isaiah 6:11-12.

2. Will all Israel eventually be saved after the Deliverer—Christ at His Second Coming—comes out of Zion to call them to salvation? Romans 11:26-27.

3. Will the nations of this earth, who have never heard about the true God and His way of life that leads to salvation, learn God's ways and walk in His paths? Micah 4:2;Isaiah 66:18-23;Micah 11:10.

COMMENT: The Gentiles will also come to be taught by Christ, the returned Deliverer and "root of Jesse," at the time when He sets His hand to remove the spiritual blindness from the house of Israel.

4. When Christ is King over all the earth during the Millennium, will the Holy Spirit (represented by "living waters") go out from Jerusalem? Zechariah 14:8-9.Will God pour out His Spirit on all people? Joel 2:28-29.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit will be made available to all and will open their minds to understand God's way of salvation. First, the modern-day descendants of the ancient twelve tribes of Israel will learn to obey, and then, following their example, also all of the other nations.

Just think what a time of great rejoicing it will be as each new member of the God Family is born into the Kingdom of God during the Millennium! They will then join the ruling saints in preparing for the time when thousands of millions will be resurrected and taught the way of salvation after the thousand years. The Rest Called After the Millennium

All who live during the Millennium will have their chance to participate in the salvation process. They will have their opportunity to grow spiritually toward spiritual birth into the God Family. But what about those who have already died without having understood God's truth?

1. Did Paul clearly understand that the people of Israel, and mankind in general, were spiritually blinded? Romans 10:16,Romans 10:18-21. Although these Israelites heard the Gospel, they did not obey it. Was this because God had purposely allowed their blindness? Romans 11:8,Romans 8:25, Romans 8:32. Yet, did Paul know that they would have a future opportunity to receive salvation? Romans 8:26.

COMMENT: When Paul said "all Israel shall be saved," he meant ALL Israel, including those of his day. But when will they be given their opportunity to come to the spiritual knowledge of salvation?

2. Does the prophet Ezekiel describe a resurrection of dead Israelites back to mortal life? Ezekiel 37:11-13.Is this clearly a resurrection to physical life—do the bodies have flesh, skin and bones, and require air to live? Ezekiel 37:5-9.

3. Will God also give His Spirit to these millions of people? Ezekiel 37:14. Will the Gentiles also be resurrected and return to their "former estate"? Ezekiel 16:55.

COMMENT: Israel is a type of all nations. Ezekiel's prophecies describe a time when both Israelites and Gentiles who died in spiritual ignorance will be given an opportunity to receive salvation.

All the inhabitants of Sodom died centuries before Ezekiel wrote this (Genesis 19:24-25). God can "bring back their captives" (RAV translation of Ezekiel 16:53)or "restore their fortunes" (Moffatt, RSV and NIV) only by resurrecting them! All unconverted Israelites will be resurrected at the same time as those Gentiles, and all will be given their first opportunity for salvation! (Ezekiel 16:62) The prophet Ezekiel does not explain when this resurrection occurs, but Christ did reveal it in His revelation to the Apostle John.

4. Does God want to eventually call and save everyone? 2 Peter 3:9;1 Timothy 2:4.Is everyone saved at the same time, or is there a definite time order or sequence? 1 Corinthians 15:22-24.

COMMENT: Even as all men die, the same all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). Everyone who has ever lived and died will be resurrected—first Christ was resurrected, then later the saints who lived and died before Christ's Second Coming will be resurrected. But what about the vast majority who never were Christ's? 1 Corinthians 15:24 includes them all in "the end"—when Christ completes His job of conquering every enemy (1 Corinthians 15:25). That happens after the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10).

Those who have not heard or understood the truth have not been consigned to eternal death. They have not sinned willfully. They never had a chance! Even if some have lived up to the best they knew while alive, the Bible teaches only one way to salvation—through belief in Christ (Acts 4:12)and spiritual conversion as defined in the Bible.

Most of our loved ones who have died "unsaved" in all probability did not die lost. They most likely were not called during this age, but their call is coming later. They shall be resurrected to mortal life and given spiritual understanding and the opportunity to become members of God's Family. Revelation 20:1-15 tells us when this great resurrection will occur.

5. Does the Bible speak of a "first" resurrection, thus implying that there are other resurrections? Revelation 20:5,last part. When is the second resurrection? Same verse, first part.

COMMENT: The first part of Revelation 20:5 is actually a parenthetical comment. The verse should read: "(But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection. " The sentence, "This is the first resurrection," refers to the spiritual resurrection of the firstfruits of God's plan, which occurs at Christ's return, just before the 1,000-year period begins (Revelation 20:4, Revelation 20:6). But notice further the first sentence in Revelation 20:5 : "But the rest of the dead [those who never had an opportunity to understand God's truth] lived not again [would not come up in a resurrection] until the thousand years were finished." This resurrection, which occurs after the 1,000 years, is the second resurrection. It is a resurrection to mortal life!

6. How is the second resurrection further elaborated on? Revelation 20:11-13. How will these people be "judged"? Revelation 20:12.

COMMENT: The dead who stand before God couldn't include true Christians today, because they will appear before Christ and receive their rewards at the first resurrection when He returns. It couldn't refer to those converted during the Millennium, because they will have already inherited the Kingdom during the thousand years, after living a normal life span.

Those in this second resurrection are those who died in spiritual ignorance in past ages. Their time of salvation occurs after the second resurrection! The Greek word translated "books" in Revelation 20:12 is biblia. It is from this word that the English word "bible" is derived. The books that are opened are the books of the Bible! They will be opened to the understanding of the multiple thousands of millions of people who had not been able to know and understand God's purpose and plan for them during their previous lifetime, never having been called by the Father and given His Spirit of understanding.

Some, assuming that "judgment" means only the pronouncing of a sentence based on past behavior, have thought that these people, even if they repented, could do nothing to alter their fate. Thankfully, God is merciful, always willing to forgive upon true repentance. In this period of judgment, not only is the Bible opened to their understanding, but the Book of Life is also opened. These people are given an opportunity to receive eternal life! God, in perfect fairness, will give them the same opportunity for salvation He now gives to those He calls in this age. However, they will not be subject to Satan's influence as we are today, because Satan will have been finally sent to his punishment (Revelation 20:10).

Let's be sure we understand the meaning of God's judgment referred to in Revelation 20:12.

7. Are true Christians today already being judged by God? 1 Peter 4:17.Is this judgment for the purpose that they might avoid condemnation? 1 Corinthians 11:32.

COMMENT: God judges His Spirit-begotten children by evaluating how well they live by His written Word. Their rewards in God's Kingdom, as we learned in Lesson 20, will depend on their character development during their mortal life.

Those resurrected after the Millennium will be judged the same way. They, like Spirit-begotten Christians today, will be given enough time to prove they are willing to live God's way through a life of overcoming and obedience to God. With God's Spirit freely available, and freed from Satan's spiritual influences, they will be given their first and only opportunity for salvation through repentance, baptism, and growing in godly character during a second mortal life.

Those who continue to live God's way of life will be changed from mortality to immortality at the end of this period of judgment.

Vast Majority to Be Born of God!

Imagine, if you can, the astonishment of those resurrected at the beginning of the period just described. Each one will be in his first moment of consciousness since death. At first, some may think they are in "heaven," "hell," or "purgatory." Most will simply be confused—bewildered.

Nothing that many had been taught about an afterlife will turn out to be true. Faced with undeniable evidence that their old teachings and ways were false, they will be more willing to admit this, start over and be taught the truth. Untold millions who never had any religious teaching whatsoever will start learning from scratch. Who will teach these untold thousands of millions? Millions of teachers who will have been born into God's Family in the first resurrection and during the Millennium.

Those resurrected back to mortal life will then undergo a process of conversion similar to that of Spirit-begotten Christians today. They will be taught God's Law, and will learn they are guilty of sin and deserving of the death penalty for all eternity as a result of their sins. They will learn of God's mercy, and that Christ paid the penalty for them, if they will accept His payment. The vast majority will undoubtedly repent.

Upon repentance and faith in Christ as their personal Savior, they will be forgiven and God's Spirit will be given to them. Then they, as Spirit-begotten children of God, can begin growing spiritually—developing God's holy, righteous and perfect character within them. For many,

unlearning all the falsehoods learned in their first life and learning God’s true ways will take time. And building character will take time, because character can be developed only through time and experience.

1. How long will their period of judgment last? Isaiah 65:20.

COMMENT: This verse in Isaiah apparently refers to this judgment period, suggesting that those resurrected then will live for 100 years, no matter how old they were when they died.

God is great, merciful, loving, not willing that any should perish. He wants all to come to the knowledge of the truth and to true repentance. But He knows it is best that most people come to understand His truth in a better world than this present evil world. That is why they will be raised up in the second resurrection—a resurrection into a world free of Satan’s deceptions, and lovingly ruled by the God Family.

They will be able to compare the results of 6,000 years of Satan’s "get" way with the 1,000 years of God’s "give" way under Christ. With 7,000 years of humanity now history, these mortals will face up to what their previous experience in sin really proved. The vast majority will choose God’s way.

2. How did Jesus refer to this special "day" or period of judgment for people who have yet to hear and understand the wonderful message of salvation? Matthew 11:20-24;Matthew 12:41-42.

COMMENT: Christ mentioned the people of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom, Nineveh in Jonah’s time and finally the Queen of the South. All of these examples of people who lived in different generations are compared to the citizens living in the cities and towns of Jesus’ day, the vast majority of whom did not understand or believe Christ’s message. Jesus tells us that they are all to be resurrected with the generation that lived during His time!

Jesus gave enough examples of people living at widespread times to prove that most of humanity will be alive at the same time on this earth. There will be pre-Flood men and women, all 12 tribes of Israel, those who lived during the Middle Ages and the vast majority living now. Even babies and children who died untimely deaths will be resurrected then. They will all rise in the second resurrection because they had not been called by God during their first lifetime. This group includes all people of all times except those who will have already been born of God, and those relatively few individuals who already had their opportunity to receive eternal life, but deliberately rejected it, having sinned willfully. Those few will be resurrected in the third and final resurrection to be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15). The ancient peoples Jesus mentioned in Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50 would have repented if He had personally come to them in their day. And they will repent and receive the Holy Spirit when resurrected into a world that has been personally ruled by Jesus Christ for 1,000 years! Your Bible shows that the vast majority of those who have ever lived will finally be born into God’s Family at the end of their coming period of judgment. God’s master plan of salvation for mankind will then be complete.

How wonderful and reassuring is the truth of our all-wise, loving and merciful Creator God!

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The teaching that a person is now either "saved" or "lost" A. is not a widespread belief of traditional Christianity. B. is based on the truth of the Bible. C. comes from the false assumption that God is trying to save the world now. D. proves that this is the "only day of salvation."

2. People who do not understand the true way to salvation A. are "lost" forever. B. have been deceived by Satan. C. can be saved some other way. D. have rejected their chance to really understand it.

3. Jesus spoke in parables A. to make the meaning of what He said clearer to the general public. B. to help convict His listeners so they would repent and be converted. C. to hide the truth from His disciples. D. so most people would not understand.

4. Which statement is FALSE? A. God wants everyone to understand His truth at this time. B. God has allowed Satan to deceive the vast majority of humanity. C. Only those whom God specially calls can understand the true way of salvation. D. God is now calling only a few to prepare them for positions of rulership in His soon-coming Kingdom.

5. When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, A. he took to himself the authority to decide what is righteousness and what is sin. B. he rejected God’s authority, in effect choosing Satan as the "god" of mankind. C. humanity was "kidnapped" by Satan and has been blinded spiritually by him ever since. D. All of the above.

6. Satan A. cannot influence humans to sin. B. is the present ruler of this world by God’s permission. C. has not deceived the whole world. D. is not the "god" of this world.

7. Jesus Christ came to earth to A. prevent Satan from deceiving mankind. B. call everyone to salvation then. C. preach His Father’s message—the Gospel of the Kingdom of God—to the public only as a witness. D. All of the above.

8. Someone who really wants to quit sinning and obey all of God’s commandments A. is immediately saved. B. is guilty of wanting to earn his salvation. C. will convince God to call him. D. is already being called by God, otherwise he would have no such desire.

9. "Predestination" A. means that God has predetermined whether a person will be saved or lost. B. has only to do with when one is called by God to understand the way of salvation. C. shows that God has decided our fate in advance. D. proves that we are not free moral agents.

10. Which statement is FALSE? A. God has predestined most to be lost. B. Some have been foreordained to be called at certain times for a specific purpose. C. God has predetermined that some be called in this age for special training to prepare them for His Kingdom. D. The majority of mankind is predestined to be called by God later.

11. The one and only way to salvation A. does not involve repentance from sin. B. has nothing to do with living God’s way. C. is through Christ and spiritual conversion as defined in the Bible. D. is accurately understood by traditional Christianity.

12. The vast majority of people who have ever lived A. have not yet understood the true way to salvation. B. have not yet had their opportunity for salvation. C. will be given their opportunity for salvation later. D. All of the above.

13. One way a person can permanently lose salvation is by A. dying before hearing about Christ. B. sinning willfully after having been called by God and given spiritual understanding of His truth. C. having been predestined to be lost. D. None of the above—everyone will eventually be saved by being given a second chance.

14. A willful (or unforgiveable) sin is A. one that a person refuses to repent of. B. one that is committed through human weakness. C. impossible for a Spirit-begotten child of God to commit. D. one that many have committed.

15. Another way one can sin willfully is to A. break the First Commandment. B. accuse Christ of wrongdoing. C. intentionally speak abusively against God’s Spirit and attribute works of God’s power to the devil. D. All of the above.

16. Now is "the" day of salvation A. for all professing Christians. B. for the entire world. C. for all who want it to be. D. only for the few who have been called and begotten by God.

17. God’s spiritual truth A. can be understood by anyone. B. is understood by most professing Christians. C. is understood only by those whom God has called and given His Spirit. D. can be fully understood without having the Holy Spirit.

18. Which one of the following is NOT a reason God is calling only a few in this age? A. To help proclaim Christ’s Gospel to the world as a witness. B. To give them eternal life as a special favor or reward. C. To train them to rule with Christ in the World Tomorrow. D. To prepare them to teach the way of salvetion to all humanity after Christ’s Second Coming.

19. The "firstfruits" of salvation—those whom God calls and begets before Christ’s Second Coming-- A. must use God’s Spirit to overcome Satan and qualify for responsibilities in the Kingdom of God. B. are no longer susceptible to Satan’s influence. C. do not need to have the Spirit of God to grow in His character. D. are trying to reform this world.

20. All mortals who are alive after Christ returns will A. immediately be given immortality. B. be taught God’s way and given an opportunity for salvation. C. be denied access to the Holy Spirit. D. continue to be deceived by Satan.

21. Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones being brought back to life A. is a prophecy showing that those who died in spiritual ignorance will be brought back to mortal life and given God’s Spirit of understanding. B. is just a fanciful story. C. pictures the first resurrection. D. does not refer to any resurrection.

22. What will happen at the first resurrection, which will occur at Christ’s Second Coming? A. All the dead will be brought back to mortal life and given their opportunity for salvation. B. Those who

willfully rejected God will be cast into the lake of fire. C. The "firstfruits" of God’s plan of salvation will be given immortality. D. The dead in Christ, will go to heaven.

23. Those resurrected to mortal life in the second resurrection, which will occur after the Millennium, will be A. given their first and only opportunity for salvation. B. given spiritual understanding of the Bible. C. judged by their works—how well they live by God’s Word. D. All of the above.

24. The vast majority who will be made alive in the second resurrection will A. be condemned to eternal death for having followed Satan’s way during their previous life. B. not be able to compare Satan’s "get" way with God’s "give" way. C. choose to live God’s way, develop His character and eventually be born into God’s Family. D. remember nothing about their former life.

25. Who will live again during the future "day" or period "of judgment" that Jesus referred to in Matthew 11:20-24?A. People from Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, Nineveh, Israel and Judah. B. Children who died untimely deaths, those who lived before the Flood, and most people alive today. C. Everyone who had not been called and begotten by God during his first life. D. All of the above.

Lesson 22

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 22 What Is God’s Purpose for Mankind?

God created human beings for an awe-inspiring purpose. But few have ever understood that purpose! The Bible reveals man’s incredible potential. It shows how God is working out His glorious purpose on earth! LET’S suppose you have just won an all-expense paid trip. Wouldn’t you want to know where you are going, how you’ll get there, and as much as possible about the trip itself? Our present mortal life can be compared to a journey. Yet, how many know—or have ever thought about the possibility—that God has something to say about our journey?

God, in fact, reveals through His inspired Word the incredible destination of our journey! He gives us the itinerary for the trip, and tells us the marvelous things we’ll do when we get there. But to successfully complete our journey, we must carefully follow the travel plans He has laid out for us.

Exactly what is the exciting destination, or destiny, of mankind—the tremendous future God has planned for you?

Man to Have Dominion

King David of ancient Israel mused about God’s purpose for man. He observed the starry heavens, and was inspired to write: "O LORD...when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalms 8:1,Psalms 8:3-4). From several thousand feet up, men look like tiny insignificant ants! Yes, why should God be concerned about puny man? The connection between man and the stars began to be revealed to David, for he continues: "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." How did God do this? "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psalms 8:5-8).

David here refers to man’s "dominion" or rule as that over which God gave mankind authority when Adam was created. This includes the solid earth, the atmosphere, the sea and all the creatures God created (Genesis 1:26-28). These are, in part or in whole, under man’s jurisdiction at the present time. But in the New Testament scriptures, written much later, a far greater destiny and dominion for man is revealed! The Incredible Human Potential In the book of Hebrews, we read: "For unto the angels bath he [God] not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:5). The theme of the first half of this chapter is "the world to come"—the Millennium and thereafter!

Then, beginning with Hebrews 2:6, is a quotation from Psalms 8:4-6. Again, the writer of the book of Hebrews shows that God has now placed the solid earth, the earth’s atmosphere, the sea and all living things under man. But the writer is inspired to see something infinitely more profound that is to happen to man in the world to come. This revealed knowledge of God’s purpose for

mankind—of man’s incredible, awesome potential—staggers the imagination! Science knows nothing of it. Higher education is in utter ignorance of it. And certainly no religion of this world knows it.

Continuing in this passage in Hebrews, beginning as it leaves off quoting the eighth Psalm, the awesome human potential is revealed: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his [man’s] feet. For in that he [God] put all in subjection under him [man], he [God] left nothing that is not put under him" (Hebrews 2:8). NOTHING is excluded here! The Greek word translated "all things" also appears in Hebrews 1:2-3, and is there translated "the universe" in the Moffatt translation. That is the intended meaning in Hebrews 2:8.In other words, God is revealing to us that the endless universe, with all its galaxies, its countless stars and planets—everything—will eventually be put under man’s dominion! "But now we see not yet all things [the universe] put under him [man]" (Hebrews 2:8). Remember, this is speaking of the "world to come"—not today’s world. Man will be put over "all things" after God’s plan for man on earth is complete—after the last human has been born of God. But what do we see today? "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour..." (Hebrews 2:9). Man, except for Christ, is not yet crowned with glory and honor. But he will be in a new age—yet in the future. The living Christ already sustains the entire universe by His limitless divine power (Hebrews 1:3). The passage in Hebrews 2:1-18 continues to show His superiority over the angels as the begotten and born Son of God.

Angels are individually created spirit beings. Invisible to human eyes, they are servants of God, ministering to those who are now on a lower level than angels, but who are heirs of salvation. The Bible reveals that these heirs shall become the Spirit-born Sons of God’s ruling Family as Christ now is! (Hebrews 1:4-14).

What a stupendous, magnificent heritage God has in store for His Spirit-begotten children. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ to inherit the universe! (Romans 8:14-17).

Original Purpose for Angels

What God creates He maintains. What He creates He creates for a purpose. He intends it to be put to use—a right use that preserves and improves. This use, maintenance and improvement is controlled by the government of God. This earth was originally intended to be the training ground for a third of God’s angels. The angels, at the creation of the earth, found it so beautiful they shouted spontaneously for joy! (Job 38:4-7). The earth was to provide a glorious opportunity for them to work it, produce from it, and preserve and increase its beauty.

God’s original creation was like the unfinished furniture sold in some stores. This furniture is complete, except for the final sanding, staining and varnishing. Such furniture may be of superb quality—yet lacking the final beautifying touches. So it is with God’s creation. The universe, with its countless galaxies and solar systems containing planets such as our earth, was created perfect, but subject to a beautifying finish, which God intended the angels to accomplish. The original "unfinished" creation was produced by God. It was perfect and orderly. But God intended the angels to finish this part of His creation by adding the final beautifying touches and utilitarian phases of what was to become the final completed creation! God wanted to share the joy of creative accomplishment with all the angels! And whether or not it had been revealed to the

angels, it was a supreme trial and test to see whether they would continue to obey God's government in accomplishing the task of beautifying and finishing the earth. As they continued to follow God's instructions, they would have been entrusted with the responsibility of finishing the thousands of millions of other planets in the vast, limitless universe! This was the potential God originally had in mind for His created angelic beings.

Man's Potential Far Greater!

Instead of proceeding with God's plan for them, a third of the angels rebelled against administering the government of God. They finally attempted to replace God and take over the control of the universe. The account of this sin is revealed in Isaiah 14:1-32 and Ezekiel 28:1-26.

God then fully realized that He and the Word, who later became Jesus Christ, were the only beings who would never sin. Only members of the God Family have that kind of holy, righteous character. So how could the final beautification and completion of the limitless universe be accomplished? Only by the addition of many more members to the God Family who would also have the same holy, righteous character of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. So God created mankind for the purpose of reproducing more members of the God Family. They would help to restore the government of God on earth after their training program in the flesh was complete and they were born into His Family. Then they would go on to finish God's creation, carrying God's government to the uttermost parts of the universe!

Adam had the opportunity to obey God but failed. Had he obeyed, his obedience would have qualified him to replace Satan, who was then and still is ruler of the earth. In failing to replace Satan, Adam also failed to maintain and beautify the Garden of Eden into which God had placed him.

Earth Our Training Ground

God has given this earth to us as a training ground, and this mortal life as the time for our training. As we learned in previous lessons, Adam would have received God's Holy Spirit had he eaten of the fruit of the tree of life. He would have thus begun the process of spiritual character growth, and ultimately would have been born into God's Family. He would have been given the opportunity to finish the creation of the earth and the rest of the universe. But Adam never began his training program. So Christ, the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45,1 Corinthians 15:47), came to earth about 4,000 years later to qualify to replace Satan and was successful! He qualified to restore God's government on earth, and to be entrusted with the responsibility of being in charge of finishing the creation of the universe.

Christ also became the captain or leader of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). He is now at God's throne in heaven as our High Priest. He is helping Spirit-begotten Christians qualify to become His eternal assistants. With Christ's help through His Spirit, the members of God's Church are growing in godly character through obedience to God's Law during this mortal life, which is their training period. Our incredible potential is to become holy, sinless, powerful, Spirit-born members in God's divine ruling Family! Our spiritual birth into His Family will make us GOD Beings just like the Father and Jesus Christ!

Yes, God created man with a far greater potential than the angels, for no angel can ever become a born Son of God. God is now in the process of reproducing Himself through mankind. He is now producing Sons of God who can be trusted to never sin—who will never rebel against God's government as Lucifer did, but will always obey their spiritual Father.

Let's begin our study of God's Word with this lesson and learn more of the details of God's glorious purpose for mankind.

LESSON 22

God Is a Family The Bible reveals that we were born for a tremendous, awe-inspiring purpose. But few really understand what that purpose is. To fully understand God's glorious purpose for mankind, let's begin this study in the first chapter of Genesis.

1. What do the very first words of the Bible tell us about God? Genesis 1:1.Does the Bible clearly indicate that there is more than one God Being? Genesis 1:26. (Notice the plural pronouns "us" and "our" referring to God in Genesis 1:26.)

COMMENT: As we have learned in previous lessons, the original Hebrew word translated "God" in Genesis 1:1 and throughout the account of creation is Elohim. It is a noun, plural in form, meaning more than one—like the words church, family, or kingdom. Just as there is the animal kingdom and the human kingdom or family, Genesis 1:1-31 shows that there is also a GOD Kingdom or Family! There is one God, but God is a Family composed of more than one member. Elohim, which means "Mighty Ones," is the name of the God Family.

2. How many divine Beings presently compose the God Family? John 1:1-2.Was it the "Word" who created all things? John 1:3. What did the Word later become? John 1:14. Who, then, is the Word? Ephesians 3:9;Hebrews 1:2.And who is the other divine member of the God Family? 1 Corinthians 8:6.

COMMENT: John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 take us back to the same time in prehistory—to the original creation of the universe. Both verses reveal that the two supreme Beings composing the God Family created all things. The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John 1:1 is Logos. It means "spokesman" or "one who speaks." It was actually the Logos—the Spokesman, the Word of the God Family—who "spake, and it [the creation] was done" by the power of the Spirit of God (Psalms 33:6-9;Psalms 104:30). And so everything was created and made by the divine Being of the God Family who later became the human Jesus Christ.

3. Is God the Father of Jesus Christ? John 1:14,John 1:18, John 1:34.

COMMENT: Nearly 2,000 years ago, the same divine Personage who created all things was begotten in the virgin Mary's womb by God, who, as a result of this miraculous begettal, became His Father. Yet, at the prehistoric time of John 1:1,the Word was not yet the Son of God. He was "made" God's Son later, through being begotten by God and born of Mary as a human being, then later born of God as a divine God Being.

Thus Jesus became the Son of God. He called the great Supreme Personage who is head of the God Family "Father." Father is a family title—that of the head of the family! A father-and-son relationship is a family relationship.

God to Expand His Family

There are only two members in the God Family or Kingdom at the present time—God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. But your Bible reveals that God is going to expand His universe-ruling Family. And you can become a member of that eternal spirit-composed Family! See how this marvelous truth unfolds in your Bible.

1. After whose "image" and "likeness" was man created? Genesis 1:26-27;James 3:9,last part.

COMMENT: In God's pattern for all life, kind reproduces like kind. Just as each plant or animal reproduces after its own kind, so humans reproduce humans. But unlike any of the animals, man was created in God's own "image" and "likeness." God made man like Himself—same form and shape. The astounding truth is that God's purpose is to create mankind after the God kind!

Simply stated, God is reproducing Himself. All human beings have the awesome potential of becoming God's literal children—members of God's own divine Family!

2. Does God plainly state that it is His purpose to increase His divine Family by bringing many Sons into it? Hebrews 2:9-11;Revelation 21:7.

COMMENT: Most scriptures dealing with the spiritual children of God refer to them in the masculine gender. This is because God is referred to in the Bible in the masculine gender. However, we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28), and shall be neither male nor female when born of God (Matthew 22:30).

3. Are those who are Spirit-begotten—true Christians—already the children of God and heirs of the God Family? 1 John 3:1-2;Romans 8:16-17.

COMMENT: As we learned in our previous studies, converted Christians are now the begotten but not yet born children of God. They will be born into God's Family at the return of Jesus Christ. For this reason, God ordained the family relationship for human beings as a part of their training prior to their spiritual birth into God's Family. No other beings—whether angel or animal—have this relationship.

God instituted the human family to be a physical type of His own divine Family. He wanted humans to learn certain vital lessons that this relationship teaches (read Ephesians 5:21-33).

4. Are Spirit-begotten Christians also the affianced Bride of Christ? Ephesians 5:25-27;2 Corinthians 11:2;Revelation 19:7-9.

COMMENT: The family relationship demands the husband-and-wife relationship. And that demands marriage, mutual love and faithfulness to the matrimonial bond. The Church of God is composed of the begotten children of God. And the Church, as a body, is the affianced Bride of Christ—to marry Christ at His Second Coming, when the first resurrection occurs. The Church's coming marriage to Christ is additional evidence that the Kingdom of God is a Family—with Father, Son and Wife—and that God is to expand His divine Family! Notice further:

5. Will the humans still alive at Christ's coming be ruled and taught by Christ and the saints then already made immortal—those who will have become the collective wife of Christ? Daniel 7:18,Daniel 7:27; Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:6.

COMMENT: The mortals on earth will be taught and ruled by immortals. Those who seek salvation through Christ will then receive God’s gift of His Holy Spirit. And, after a life of growing in God’s character, as Spirit-begotten children of God must do today, they shall be born into the Family of God.

Thus the marriage of the Church to Christ will result in the begettal and birth of additional divine children—untold millions of Spirit-born members of God’s Family—during the thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints!

Man, and man only, of all life forms God has created, can be born into the God Family—the Kingdom of God. Since humans were put on earth for the very purpose of being begotten, and then born into God’s Family, the Eternal has endowed this God-plane family relationship for humans—and for humans only.

What a wonderful privilege to be given the marriage and family relationship—that we may be prepared for the spiritual marriage to Christ and divine Family status in the Kingdom of God for eternity!

Christ the Firstborn Son

1. Is Jesus Christ actually the firstborn of MANY Sons of God? Romans 8:29;Acts 26:23;Colossians 1:18.When will the other Sons of God be born into His Family? 1 Corinthians 15:22-23.

COMMENT: Christ is the only Son of God who has already been born again, by a resurrection from the dead. Other Sons are now only Spirit-begotten, not yet born. They will be born again (John 3:3-8)--born of God—in the first resurrection at Christ’s coming to rule the earth.

2. Is Christ, as the firstborn Son of God, actually the "captain" or forerunner—the leader—of our salvation through His suffering, death and subsequent resurrection to glory? Hebrews 2:9-10.Has He already inherited all power and glory in God’s ruling Family? Hebrews 2:9.

3. What made it possible for Christ to be resurrected as the firstborn Son of God? Romans 8:11;Ephesians 1:19-20.Will we become Spirit-born members of God’s Family if we have God’s Spirit dwelling in us at the time of Christ’s return or when we die? Same verses. Also read 1 Corinthians 15:49-53.

COMMENT: Clearly, it was by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit that God the Father raised Christ from death to glorious immortality, authority and power—just as He will also raise Christ’s Spirit-begotten brothers and sisters to the same glorious immortality and power, but of lesser authority. As we learned in Lesson 20, Spirit-begotten children of God are now "in training" for the time when they will be born into God’s Family. They will then be given their positions of rulership on earth under their elder brother, Jesus Christ.

Eventually, God wants thousands of millions of perfect and righteous children to be born into His Family, governed by His government, to complete in beauty, majesty and glory not only the other planets of our solar system, but of our own Milky Way galaxy and the countless other galaxies of the vast, limitless universe! (More about this exciting future later in this lesson.) God’s Begotten Children Now Growing Spiritually

Now is not yet the time for the birth of the children of God. They are now only in the "begotten" state prior to birth. Now is the time of their spiritual growth prior to becoming born-again members of the God Family. And the earth is the place of their spiritual growth—the "training ground" for entering the Kingdom of God. The universe is not the area of training to become like God—it is the reward given to us only after we have successfully completed our training here on earth!

1. Does the Bible show that God is in the process of forming and molding His begotten sons as a potter works with clay? Isaiah 64:8.During his time of training on earth, did Job realize that God was working with him in a special way? Job 14:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice the latter part of Job 14:15 : "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." The "work" was Job. Job knew he was a piece of divine workmanship in the hands of the Master Potter. Job was in the process of developing the very character of God during his mortal lifetime of spiritual training.

2. What did God say before creating Adam that further reveals what He intends to accomplish in man? Genesis 1:26.

COMMENT: Notice again the wording in Genesis 1:26:"Let us make man in our image." The Hebrew word for "image" indicates far more than merely the outward appearance of God. It also refers to mind and character. God intends for man, to whom He gave the gift of a thinking, reasoning mind, to be developing the mind and character of God! The attributes of human mind and character truly make man God’s unique physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with human beings and He intends that we develop His character during this mortal life.

3. Did the Apostle Paul know that Spirit-begotten children of God are being fashioned by God for a specific purpose? Ephesians 2:10.

COMMENT: Paul is not speaking of Adam’s creation nearly 6,000 years ago. He is speaking of true Christians, who are now being created unto good works. We are God’s "workmanship"—the Creator is still creating us. He is molding, fashioning, changing and transforming us into His own noble, righteous, holy, spiritual character! This process begins in the mind. Repentance is the first step. It is a change of mind. The receiving of the Holy Spirit is a renewing of the mind. Gradually, through Bible study, learning to live by "every word of God," being continually corrected by His Word, keeping close to God in daily prayer, and being led and empowered by the Spirit of God, the NEW MAN—with holy, spiritual character—is being created in God’s spiritual "image."

If, during this life of spiritual training, our thinking and our ways are changed until we become, in godly character, new creatures in Christ Jesus, conformed to His will, then that clay model, worked over, fashioned and shaped as God would have it, can finally be turned into the finished spiritual creation when born of God.

4. Did Paul refer to the completion of his training? 2 Timothy 4:7.

COMMENT: Paul successfully finished his spiritual training preparatory to his birth into the Family of God. Today, the first 6,000 years of human history are about over. Soon the time will come when Paul and other human beings who have "finished the course" during their time of training will no longer be earth-bound. They will be born into the eternal, spiritual God Family as very Sons of God!

5. After completing "the course" of our training, what happens next? 1 Corinthians 15:47-53.When will our change into spirit composition occur? 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

COMMENT: Those who are ready to be born of God at Christ's return will triumphantly and suddenly enter the Family of God. No longer will they be bound to this earth for sustenance, for they will have eternal life inherent as a gift from God!

6. What are those who look forward to becoming Sons of God doing now? 1 John 3:1-3.Notice especially 1 John 3:3.

COMMENT: At the resurrection, God will provide the proper spirit body for the galactic space travel that will be necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the universe-ruling Family of God. Meanwhile, those God is now training are allowing Him to work with them in first perfecting their character.

Prior to becoming the Spirit-born children of God, we are now in the process of "purifying" ourselves by bridling our bodies and controlling our thoughts with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

Now is the time to be striving to become pure in character as God Himself is pure and without flaw (Matthew 5:48). Now is the time of our training preparatory to inheriting the entire universe with Jesus Christ our elder brother!

God's Purpose Proceeding as Planned In previous lessons we learned that Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden and thereby cut himself off from ongoing contact with the Creator God. As a result, his descendants were also cut off from access to the Spirit of God and eternal life. Adam could have been begotten of God and eventually born as a Son of God in His ruling Family, had he eaten of the fruit of the tree of life. Did Adam's sin thwart God's plan for mankind, or is it proceeding as originally planned?

Anticipating the probability of Adam's sin, God had designed a fail-safe 7,000-year Master Plan for working out His purpose in man here on earth. During the first 6,000 years, He sentenced man to carry out what Adam had, in effect, demanded for the human race—to go its own way, cut off from God, doing its own thing, relying on the self only. The results of man's way, as influenced by Satan the devil, have been catastrophic!

Let's review a few basic scriptures proving that God's plan for man is on schedule.

1. Has God allowed Satan to cunningly deceive the whole world? Revelation 12:9.Is the devil in reality the god of this world? 2 Corinthians 4:4.

COMMENT: Satan led the first humans into sin (Genesis 3:1-6). So man began the 6,000 years of his sentence with the invisible devil ruling him by deception! From Adam until now, Satan has successfully influenced human beings into forming their own governments, religions, societies and civilization based on his way of "get" instead of God's way of "give."

2. During this time in which man has been cut off from God because of sin, can just anyone come to Christ? John 6:44,John 6:65.

COMMENT: Except when God does intervene by specially calling one to repentance and salvation—to a life of training for His Kingdom—none can come to Christ. Jesus said so! All are

still cut off through sin, except for the few God calls out of a life of sin.

After Adam sinned, it was God's purpose to prove by 6,000 years of human experience that Satan's "get" way, which is contrary to the way of God's government, is the cause of untold suffering, pain and death—just the opposite of what man really wants.

About 4,000 years after Adam sinned, God, as previously planned (Revelation 13:8), sent Jesus Christ into the world to rescue God's called from the death penalty, which all have incurred through the breaking of His commandments.

3. Jesus also was a Messenger sent from God. What message of hope and good news did He bring to mankind? Mark 1:14-15;John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Jesus foretold the time when all mankind will no longer be cut off from God and ruled by Satan. He announced that the government of God would be restored on earth by the Kingdom of God, composed of the Spirit-born members of God's Family.

Jesus proclaimed the good news that those called by God may become God's own children, ultimately to be changed from material to spirit composition, becoming the members of God's ruling Family. Of the many thousands who heard Jesus' message, only about 120 continued as His disciples (Acts 1:15). They were chosen by the Father to be the pioneer members of His New Testament Church. Thousands more were added to the Church by God through the subsequent preaching of the apostles. But before A.D. 70, the message Christ and His apostles taught was rapidly suppressed by a growing, deceived counterfeit church. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God was not again proclaimed to the world until January, 1934. It was then that God's chosen servant and apostle, the late Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, began proclaiming the Gospel over a tiny 100-watt radio station in Eugene, Oregon, in the United States of America.

4. Did God long ago prophesy today's knowledge explosion? Daniel 12:4.

COMMENT: After almost 6,000 years of human history, and during the lifetime of God's modern-day apostle, we find awesome material progress in the world. Nearly all modern technology and industry has been developed in the past 200 years, and far more than half of all the world's technological, scientific and industrial development has occurred in this 20th century! The machine age, the nuclear age and the space age have followed in rapid succession. The automobile, airplane, radio, television and many laborsaving devices have all been invented in very recent times.

Men have also designed and produced incredible computers, and even sent astronauts to the moon and back. And just a few decades ago, men developed the weapons of mass destruction that could erase all human life on this planet, were it not for the great God who has promised to intervene and prevent the annihilation of humanity!

Almost 6,000 years of human history have proved that man's mind, without God's Holy Spirit, is confined to understanding and working with the physical world. Human systems of education have become wholly materialistic, and most of man's motives stem from the attitude of "get." He does not know how to live in harmony and peace with his neighbor, but is capable of going to the moon and back! The appalling evils and problems amidst awesome scientific progress has been the result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden! For nearly 6,000 years, God's purpose

for man has proceeded just as He had planned from the beginning. Soon, spiritual salvation will be opened to all humanity after Christ comes to remove Satan from the throne of the earth and assumes the rulership over all nations He qualified for nearly 2,000 years ago.

We are now living in the very last generation of the 6,000-year period in which man was to be cut off from God. We are now nearing the time when God's glorious purpose for those He has called prior to Jesus' Second Coming will become reality. They shall then become like God, for they shall be born into His Family as very Gods!

What We'll Be Like When Born of God

Those who are called of God, who receive His Spirit and who grow and overcome spiritually, will be born of God when Christ returns. But what will it be like as a member of God's divine Family? What characteristics and abilities will we possess? Let's have a sneak preview of what it will be like to be a God!

1. What must take place to enter God's Family? John 3:3-8.When born of God, will we be like Him? Romans 8:29;1 John 3:1-2.

COMMENT: To be "conformed to the image" of Christ means to become like Him—to be glorified as He is glorified—to become a member of the glorious FAMILY OF GOD as Christ now is! The Bible reveals that we are to become, through a spiritual birth, just like the two members of the God Family. We will possess the same abilities and characteristics of God the Father and our elder brother Jesus Christ.

2. When will the spiritual birth of Christians take place? 1 Corinthians 15:52.When will the resurrection occur? 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.Will they be changed to spirit at that time? 1 Corinthians 15:42-49;Php 3:20-21.

COMMENT: When Jesus Christ returns to earth, the Spirit-begotten children of God who have died through the ages will be resurrected to spirit life by the Spirit of God, and those still alive will be instantly changed into spirit beings. At that moment, they will be "born again," this time as members of God's own Family. And God's own offspring will then have eternal life inherent within themselves like Jesus Christ their elder brother!

3. To what did Jesus compare one who is born of the Spirit? John 3:8.

COMMENT: The effects of the wind are easily discernible, but the wind itself cannot be seen. When you are born of the Spirit of God, you will be invisible to human eyes, unless you choose to manifest yourself.

4. After His resurrection, was Jesus, with His spirit-composed body, able to suddenly appear and disappear? Luke 24:36-37,Luke 24:31. Was He able to pass through walls? John 20:19,John 20:26. Can one composed of spirit appear as mortal flesh and bone when necessary? Luke 24:38-40.Can he even eat if he so desires? Luke 24:41-43.

5. Are spirit bodies capable of traveling through space at incredible speed—undoubtedly faster than light? Compare John 20:17,John 20:19-20 with Matthew 28:9.

COMMENT: Earlier on the day after His resurrection from the dead, Christ would not let one of His disciples touch Him because He had not yet ascended to His Father’s throne in heaven. But later that same day, Christ allowed His disciples to touch Him. This clearly shows that Christ traveled to heaven and returned to earth on the same day!

"Truth is stranger than fiction," goes the old saying. The marvelous, exciting truth about your awesome potential, as revealed in the Bible, pales into nothingness any science fiction thriller you could ever read or see!

6. Once a person has been changed into spirit, can he ever die? Luke 20:35-36.Is the God Family eternal, or ever living? Psalms 90:2;Psalms 102:25-27.

COMMENT: Both members of the God Family have always existed, though our finite human minds cannot understand how this is possible. Nevertheless, God tells us through His inspired Word that we, like God and Christ, will live forever once we are born into the universe-ruling Family of God!

7. Was Jesus "glorified" after His resurrection? John 17:5;Hebrews 2:9.How did Christ’s glorified spirit body appear when manifested in a vision to the Apostle John? Revelation 1:13-16.

COMMENT: To be "glorified" means to be given great power and brightness. Before Christ became a human being, He had a glorious, resplendent, powerful spirit body like His Father’s. After His resurrection, He was restored to the same power and glory. Christ’s powerful spirit body radiates light as bright as the sun!

8. Will God also glorify all those who become members of His divine Family by giving them this same great power and glory? Romans 8:17;Colossians 3:4;Matthew 13:43.Did Jesus give three of His disciples a fleeting glimpse in a vision of this future glorified condition? Matthew 17:1-2,Matthew 17:9. What other scripture gives us an idea of the future glorified state of those who shall be born of God at the resurrection? Daniel 12:2-3.

COMMENT: The glory that Spirit-begotten children of God are to receive at the resurrection will be so great it will make them shine as the brilliant stars of the heavens—like the sun in full strength! But this is only a part of what God has in store for Spirit-born members of His Family. Let’s notice other wonderful characteristics they, as God’s children, will possess.

9. The most important attribute of God the Father and Christ, the firstborn Son of God and our elder brother, is their character. What are some of the aspects of God’s divine character that God’s children will possess in full measure when born of God? Galatians 5:22-23;2 Timothy 1:7.

COMMENT: As we learned in Lesson 11, God possesses holy, righteous character. And He intends that we possess the same love, joy, patience, mercy, faith, kindness, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-restraint and right self-direction that He has. Character also involves knowledge, wisdom, purpose and ability.

It is this character that Spirit-begotten children of God will possess in full measure when born into His Family. In the meantime, God wants us to be developing, with the help of His Spirit, these aspects of His character during our mortal lives.

10. How does the Bible define the nature and character of God? 1 John 4:8.What is the love of God? 1 John 5:2-3.Is God’s love ("charity" in the King James Version) the greatest single aspect of His character? 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.Why? 1 John 4:16.

COMMENT: God’s character can be summed up in one word—LOVE. God’s character travels in the direction of His Law—the way of LOVE. It is the way of giving, serving, helping—of outgoing concern for others. God has that character!

God has an outgoing concern for all of humanity. He gave His only begotten Son to reconcile us to Him, and He makes the joys of everlasting life possible for us. He showers on us every good and precious gift, including the Holy Spirit, which we can receive as a begettal from Him after we repent of breaking His Law, turn from the wrong way of this world, begin to resist it, and turn to Him through faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior! When born into the Family of God, we’ll possess the love of God perfectly. And through that love, we’ll administer God’s government on earth, and throughout the universe for all eternity.

11. Will those born of God ever sin? 1 John 3:9.Will they be absolutely perfect as the Father and Christ are now? Matthew 5:48.Will that perfect, holy and righteous character ever change? Malachi 3:6;Hebrews 13:8.

COMMENT: The character of both God the Father and Christ the Son is that of spiritual holiness, righteousness and absolute perfection. That character, as we have just seen, can be summed up in the one word "love," defined as an out-flowing, loving concern for others. It is the way of giving, serving, helping, sharing—not the way of "get."

It is the way devoid of coveting, lust and greed, vanity and selfishness, competition, strife, violence and destruction, envy and jealousy, resentment and bitterness—all characteristics of Satan’s nature.

God’s inherent nature is the way of peace, justice, mercy, happiness and joy radiating outward toward those He has created. He is the embodiment of perfect, holy and righteous character!

Since God possesses perfect character, He has determined that He will not go contrary to the perfect, holy, spiritual Law He set in living, active, inexorable motion to cause and produce all good. God has so set His will that He cannot sin or transgress His Law. The character of both God the Father and Christ the Son, which one-third of the angels failed to copy and develop, is the way of God’s Law. And, as we have already learned, He is now in the process of creating this same godly character in Spirit-begotten Christians as they, by their own choice and with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, live His righteous way of life! When we are finally born of God—when we are given a spirit body, after first growing spiritually and developing God’s character during our time of training—we will begin a glorious, never-ending life in the universe-ruling Family of God! A Glorious, Never-ending Future! The Kingdom of God is the ruling Family of God. And those who become a part of that Family are destined to rule the earth with Jesus Christ for 1,000 years. They will become kings and priests, ruling and teaching in the World Tomorrow.

Thousands of millions will learn to live God’s way and be born into His ruling Family during this period. Then, after the Millennium, the billions who died before Christ’s Second Coming without having had an opportunity to know and understand God’s way to salvation will be raised in a

physical resurrection. They will be given the opportunity to become Sons of God during this period of judgment (Revelation 20:11-12), as we learned in the last lesson.

These additional thousands of millions will be added to God's spirit Family at the conclusion of God's plan for physical mankind.

It has been estimated that 40 billion (40 thousand million) people have lived from the time of Adam until now. It would be difficult to accurately estimate the number of people who will yet be born and enter God's Kingdom during the Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment periods. There no doubt will be multiple billions. But let's suppose that 200,000,000,000 (200 billion) are ultimately born into God's Family. Since God is busy working, creating and sustaining what He has created (John 5:17), He knows His Sons would not be happy unless they, too, are working and producing. And so what could keep this incredibly huge Family of God Beings busy for all eternity?

1. Just how great is the authority Jesus Christ has already inherited? Hebrews 1:1-2;Matthew 28:18;1 Corinthians 15:27-28.Will those who are born into God's Family share in that inheritance as co-owners and co-rulers with Christ? Romans 8:16-17;Revelation 21:7.And will God's government continue to expand for all eternity? Isaiah 9:6-7;Revelation 22:5.

COMMENT: The Moffatt translation correctly renders "all things" in Hebrews 1:2 as "the universe." Incredible as it may sound, your ultimate potential and the potential of every human being is co-rulership of the universe with Jesus Christ and God the Father! But is there really enough "out there" for our estimated number of 200 thousand million Spirit-born Sons of God to rule? The Encyclopaedia Britannica estimates that there are more than 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (10 sextillion) stars in the universe. This figure is virtually impossible to comprehend. If an estimate of 200 billion Sons of God is taken as a possibility, that means each member of God's Family would be responsible for maintaining and developing 50 billion stars, and their attendant planets—enough to form an entire galaxy! Our awesome potential is to be born into the ruling Family of God, receiving the very power of God! Together, all the born Sons of God will ultimately be given jurisdiction over the entire universe!

2. Is the whole creation characterized as anxiously awaiting the birth of the Sons of God? Romans 8:19-23.("Creature" should be translated "creation," as it is in more translations of the Bible.)

COMMENT: Paul here personifies the whole creation of God, including the stars and planets. He shows that the whole universe is waiting with eager longing for the actual birth and appearing of the Sons of God. That is because these billions of perfect and righteous beings, governed by God's divine government, will restore from the condition of decay ("corruption" in Romans 8:21 of the King James Version) that resulted from Lucifer's rebellion, and complete the creation of, in all their beauty, majesty and glory, not only the other planets of our solar system (now in utter waste and decay), but also the rest of our galaxy and countless other galaxies in the universe.

What else are we going to do? God, first of all, is Creator. Those who become the Sons of God will also be creators! The Scriptures indicate we shall impart LIFE to billions of dead planets, as life has been imparted to this earth. We shall create, as the Father directs and instructs. Planets will be turned into beautiful, productive, life-sustaining worlds. We shall continue to create and rule throughout all eternity!

Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 22:1-21 show that there will then be no pain, suffering or evil, because all will have learned to choose God’s way, which leads to all that is good. It will be an eternal life of accomplishment, constantly looking forward in joyous anticipation to new creative projects, as well as looking back with happiness and joy over what shall have already been accomplished.

We shall never grow tired or weary. We will always be joyously alive— full of energy, vitality, exuberant life, strength and power! This is the incredible potential of every human being! Are you in the process of preparing to fulfill this, God’s glorious purpose for your life?

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The book of Hebrews reveals that man’s dominion or rule, now limited to the earth and its atmosphere, will A. eventually extend over "all things"—the entire universe. B. extend only to the rest of our solar system. C. be forever limited to earth. D. never be above the angels.

2. The earth, when created, was A. ugly and disorganized. B. like a finished piece of furniture. C. to be given a beautifying finish by the angels. D. so perfect it could not be improved.

3. If the angels had continued to obey God and completed earth’s creation, A. they would have lived in eternal retirement on earth. B. God would have entrusted them with the responsibility of completing the rest of the universe. C. they would have been born into God’s Family. D. they would have been allowed to do as they pleased.

4. After a third of the angels sinned, God realized that only members of His Family could be trusted to remain sinless forever. God then decided to A. create mankind for the purpose of enlarging His Family. B. train humans so they could be trusted to help restore His government on earth and finish the creation of the universe. C. develop His holy, righteous, perfect character in man. D. All of the above.

5. To assist Christ in finishing the creation of the universe, Spirit-begotten Christians must first be trained for their coming responsibility by A. studying the sciences. B. creating beautiful works of art. C. growing in God’s character through keeping His spiritual Law. D. learning how to travel through space.

6. The real potential of every human being is A. to become a God Being just like the Father and Jesus Christ. B. to become equal to the angels. C. to become like Adam was before he sinned. D. understood by all professing Christians.

7. In Genesis 1:1,the Hebrew word for "God" is Elohim, which A. refers to one divine Being. B. means "Mighty Ones"—the divine Beings, presently two in number, who compose the Kingdom or Family of God. C. refers to three equal divine Beings known as the Trinity. D. refers to God and angels.

8. Mankind was created in God's own "image and "likeness," A. just like the angels were. B. which makes humans equal to the Creator God. C. because God's purpose is to create humans after the God kind. D. because God did not intend to reproduce Himself through human beings.

9. God instituted the family relationship among humans A. to be a physical type of His own divine Family. B. as another evolutionary step from the social groupings of apes. C. to prevent divorce. D. only after Adam and Eve sinned.

10. The spiritual marriage of the Church to Christ at His Second Coming A. is evidence that the Kingdom of God is not a Family. B. will be completely unlike human marriages. C. will result in the begettal and birth of untold millions of divine children into the Family of God. D. All of the above.

11. Jesus Christ is called "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29)because A. He was the first to be born of God's Spirit into the divine Family of God. B. many other Spirit-begotten children of God will be born into His Family at Christ's return. C. God's Family will expand to include many children of God. D. All of the above.

12. God's Spirit-begotten children A. do not need to grow spiritually before being born into God's Family. B. are being trained and tested before God gives them eternal life at Christ's return. C. do not have to obey God to grow spiritually. D. do not have to do any "works" before being born of God.

13. The Apostle Paul wrote that true Christians are God's "workmanship" because A. they are descendants of Adam and Eve. B. they are already perfect spiritual examples of His creative ability. C. God is in the process of creating His righteous character in them. D. All of the above.

14. How does God develop His character in His Spirit-begotten children? A. By not leading and empowering them through His Spirit. B. By not instructing and correcting them through His Word. C. By forcing them to obey Him. D. Gradually, as they learn to live by every word of God.

15. When God's Spirit-begotten children are born into His Family, they will A. not look like Christ, nor shine like the sun. B. have the same glory, power and authority as the angels. C. have eternal life as a gift from God. D. be like Adam was before he sinned.

16. Adam's sin A. thwarted God's plan for mankind. B. did not stop God from proceeding with His Master Plan for man. C. forced God to think about what He could do to repair the damage to His plan for man. D. has not resulted in man doing his own thing for nearly 6,0OO years.

17. Which statement is FALSE? A. Human civilization is based on Satan's way Of "get." B. Humans, without God's Holy Spirit, do not know how to live in harmony and peace with one another. C. For nearly 6,00O years, the "get" way has produced the opposite of what mankind really wants. D. The "get" way results in love, peace and harmony.

18. Which one of the following will a Spirit-born child of God NOT be able to do? A. Travel to other planets without a spaceship. B. Tell Christ what to do. C. Pass through walls and locked doors. D. Appear as a human when necessary.

19. God’s children, after being born into His Family, will A. possess God’s perfect character in full measure. B. begin developing God’s holy, righteous character. C. have to choose either God’s way of "give" or Satan’s way of "get." D. finally learn which way of life is best.

20. Keeping God’s Law is necessary for righteous character development because A. the Law does not define righteousness. B. God’s perfect Law of love defines His character. C. God wants to see how well we can follow arbitrary rules and regulations. D. None of the above.

21. The Spirit-born children of God’s Family will A. administer His government with His Law of love. B. rule by their own laws. C. still possess human nature. D. still sin occasionally.

22. When God’s plan of salvation is complete, His incredibly huge Family will A. not have enough to do. B. be bored for eternity. C. be busy and productive forever. D. make it possible for God to take a well-deserved vacation.

23. When will God’s government stop expanding? A. When everyone has learned God’s way. B. When all members of God’s Family have fulfilled their responsibilities. C. When the limits of the known universe are reached. D. Never.

24. The entire physical creation is described as anxiously awaiting the spiritiral birth of the Sons of God because A. it will then be changed into spirit and thus be a perfect creation. B. the creation is now complete. C. they will begin to restore and beautify the entire universe. D. the physical creation will then be destroyed.

25. Those who become the Spirit-born children of God will A. never grow tired or weary. B. assist the Father and Christ in ruling the universe forever. C. enjoy a never-ending life of creative accomplishments. D. All of the above.

Lesson 23 Part 1

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 23Part 1 Why Christians Should Keep God’s Holy Days

Why did God institute the WEEKLY Sabbath and, later, seven ANNUAL Sabbaths? What do they picture? Were GOD’S Holy Days for ancient Israel only, or are they also for the New Testament Church of God? GOD created mankind for a stupendous, awe-inspiring purpose! That incredible purpose was first revealed when man was created. God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Your Bible here reveals that God is reproducing Himself through man. God made us for the purpose of fashioning and molding us into His character "image"—ultimately to be born as spirit-composed members of His universe-ruling Family! But this creative work takes time. To accomplish this wonderful purpose in mankind, God has allotted 7,000 years—seven millennial "days" (2 Peter 3:8).

During the first 6,000 years since Adam’s sin, God has allowed humanity to go its own way, do its own thing, govern itself by its own laws, as influenced by Satan. During the last 1,000 years, man will be ruled directly by Jesus Christ and the saints. Satan will then be completely restrained from broadcasting his evil attitudes to people. The Bible reveals that God instituted for His Church certain days that picture His purpose for human life, and the plan by which He is accomplishing that purpose.

Weekly Sabbath Pictures God’s Purpose When God set apart and made holy the seventh-day Sabbath for man (Genesis 2:2-3;Mark 2:27), He gave mankind a day of rest that has great significance. To His "Church in the wilderness"—the congregation of ancient Israel (Acts 7:38)--God revealed that Sabbath keeping would be a "sign" between Him and His people (Exodus 31:16-17). This sign is a proof of identity. Keeping the weekly Sabbath reminds us that God is the Creator of all things, including man. It is also a major sign identifying the true people of God! The Sabbath also pictures to God’s people the soon-coming Millennium, when mankind will experience "rest" from war, poverty, fear and suffering. This 1,000-year period will be the seventh millennial "day"—the "Sabbath"--of God’s 7,000-year "week." It is then that the knowledge of God’s wonderful purpose will fill the earth (Isaiah 11:9). But the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath has even further significance and meaning. It also looks forward to the completion of God’s spiritual creation in man. The Sabbath is a type of the Christian’s future spiritual "rest"—of being born into the divine Kingdom or Family of God! When born of God’s Spirit, we will no longer be working against the weaknesses of our present mortal flesh. With spirit-composed bodies, we will never become tired or weary. We’ll always be alert and active! The Bible also reveals that God set apart and made holy certain other days of the year in addition to the weekly Sabbath.

Annual Holy Days Picture God’s Master Plan

God has a Master Plan by which He is fulfilling His awesome purpose for mankind. And His Son, Jesus Christ, plays the central role in God’s little-known plan for man.

God’s plan is revealed by seven annual festivals. These annual observances give a step-by-step outline of how God is working out His Master Plan for man. Each vividly pictures a great event in God’s plan. It was not until after the Israelites were delivered from Egypt that God revealed the rest of His annual festivals. As God made the weekly Sabbath for man when man was made, so He gave His people seven annual festivals, with their annual Holy Days (Sabbaths), when He established the Church (or congregation of Israel) in the wilderness. But Israel, under the covenant made at Sinai, had no promise of receiving the Holy Spirit, and therefore could not understand the spiritual meaning of these annual observances.

Regardless of carnal Israel’s lack of understanding, God’s annual Holy Days were ordained to be kept FOREVER! Christ kept them. The New Testament Church, founded by Jesus in A.D. 31, kept them. And God’s Church keeps them today!

Just as the weekly Sabbath is a "sign" between God and His people, so are the annual Holy Days (Exodus 31:13). They are the "feasts of the LORD"— "my feasts," said God (Leviticus 23:2,Leviticus 23:4).

These feasts are, as the God of the Old Testament said in Leviticus 23:37-38,to be kept as holy convocations "beside the [weekly] sabbaths of the LORD"! And as we learned in Lesson 17, God’s festivals, which are a part of God’s Law, were not done away with when the Sinaitic Covenant ceased to be in force at Christ’s death. The whole story of God’s marvelous plan is to be reenacted year after year by God’s Spirit-begotten children—spiritual Israel today—through the keeping of God’s Holy Days. The observance of these days reminds them of His great Master Plan and their part in it.

God’s Spiritual Harvests In the land settled by ancient Israel (later known as Palestine and now occupied by the modern state of Israel), there is a small spring grain harvest followed by a much larger late summer and autumn harvest. These yearly agricultural harvests are symbolic of God’s spiritual "harvests" of mankind!

Today, we can understand from the teachings of Christ and the apostles that God intends the spring festivals to illustrate that all those He has called to become His Spirit-begotten children before Christ’s Second Coming are only the "firstfruits" harvest (James 1:18)--only the relatively small beginning of His spiritual harvest of individuals into His divine Family. The festivals of the much larger autumn harvest season picture God’s calling of thousands of millions of humanity to salvation and Sonship in His glorious Family after Christ’s return. In Leviticus 23:1-44, we find a summary of these annual festivals. The first three, beginning with the Passover, are memorials of the first part of God’s Master Plan. They picture the firstfruits of Christ’s labors. The last four festivals look forward to the future and show how and when God will reap the great autumn harvest of people into His Family!

Holy Days Preserved for God’s Church The ancient Israelites, in general, did not understand God’s great purpose for mankind. Nor did they understand the spiritual significance of the steps within God’s Master Plan as pictured by His annual Holy Days. God did not reveal this spiritual understanding to them (Ephesians 3:4-5)because it was not yet His time to give them His Holy Spirit. Then why did Christ give God’s Law and Holy Days to ancient Israel? The Bible tells us that the "oracles"—the Old Testament Scriptures, which include the knowledge of God’s weekly

Sabbath, annual Sabbaths and festivals, and God’s true calendar—were given to Israel to be passed on from generation to generation. The Israelites, as we read in Acts 7:38,"received the lively oracles to give unto us [New Testament Christians]." But more than seven centuries later, the house of Israel went into Assyrian captivity, losing their identity and their knowledge of God. They did not preserve the Hebrew or Old Testament Scriptures nor God’s calendar for Christians today. Then who did? The Jews! The house of Judah—the Jews—which became separated from the nation Israel after the death of Solomon, went into Babylonian captivity during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar about 120 years later. But Judah retained the knowledge of her identity and her God.

Recognizing the fact that they had gone into Babylonian captivity for breaking the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:17-18), the Jews became overly strict in its observance. Even though they lacked spiritual understanding, they faithfully retained the knowledge of the true Sabbath, and preserved the Old Testament Scriptures and the true calendar.

Notice what Paul, under inspiration of God, asks: "What advantage then hath the Jew?" Then he answers in part: "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2).

God used the Jews to preserve the Hebrew or Old Testament Scriptures, the weekly Sabbath and the calendar by which we may know exactly when to keep God’s Holy Days each year. Of all the tribes of Israel, God entrusted the Jews to be the carriers of this revealed knowledge for the New Testament Spirit-begotten Church!

All of God’s festivals are listed together in Leviticus 23:1-44, starting with the seventh-day Sabbath, a weekly festival. Lessons 24 through 31 will cover these important festivals thoroughly, beginning with the weekly Sabbath. An entire lesson will be devoted to each. The vital details of God’s Master Plan for fulfilling His great purpose in man will unfold for you in the coming months. This lesson will present a brief OVERVIEW of each of God’s Holy Days, focusing on their symbolic meaning and specific relevance to Christians today. Let’s begin to understand the tremendous meaning of these "feasts of the LORD"!

LESSON 23 God’s Seventh-day Sabbath As we have learned in previous lessons, God’s plan calls for the restoration of His government on earth through His divine ruling Kingdom, composed of future Spirit-born members of His Family. God’s government is based on His spiritual Law of love. It is love toward God and love toward fellowman. God’s love is further magnified by the Ten Commandments, the first four of which show us how to love God—how we are to worship Him. The fourth commandment, like the other nine, is an absolutely essential part of God’s Law. Keeping God’s seventh-day Sabbath holy is a sign that identifies those who worship the Creator God, and Him only. This is because the Sabbath is a memorial of God’s creation. But the Sabbath also looks forward to the Millennium and the completion of God’s spiritual creation in man.

Let’s begin to understand the great meaning involved in keeping the seventh-day Sabbath.

1. On which day of creation week did God rest? Genesis 2:2-3;Exodus 20:11.Did God rest because He was tired from all the work He had done during the previous six days? Isaiah 40:28.

COMMENT: God is composed of spirit and never becomes tired, as physical human beings do. Therefore He had no reason to rest except that by resting, God "made" the Sabbath and set an example for humans to follow.

2. Who in the God Family made that very first Sabbath? Colossians 1:13-16;Mark 2:27-28.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath because He made it! As we have proved in our previous studies, He was the Lord of the Old Testament and the actual Creator of all things. By ceasing to work on the seventh day of creation week, Christ set apart that 24-hour period and every seventh day afterward for a special and holy use. (The Sabbath begins at sunset, in the evening, at the close of the sixth day, and ends at sunset, in the evening, at the close of the seventh day. See Leviticus 23:32 for an example of when God begins and ends days.)

3. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was made? Mark 2:27.Who would that include? Exodus 20:8-10,especially Exodus 20:10.

COMMENT: "The Sabbath was made for man," declared Jesus. Every seventh day from creation was set apart by God as time to be specially observed by mankind. The Sabbath was to benefit all who would ever live, if they kept it as God intended.

4. How did Christ intend the Sabbath to benefit mankind? Deuteronomy 5:14.(Notice the word rest.)

COMMENT: The word Sabbath means "rest" in Hebrew, the language in which the Old Testament was written. Physical rest and mental relaxation after a busy week are obvious reasons for keeping the Sabbath. God knew humans would need periodic rest and change from work. But the purpose for keeping God’s Sabbath goes far beyond merely resting on it. The seventh-day Sabbath has to do with God’s great purpose for creating mankind!

Man desperately needs this time each week in which to have close spiritual contact with God. The Sabbath gives us time to think more about God, to pray to Him, to worship Him (both in private and in fellowship with others) and to study the Bible to understand more about God’s awesome purpose for our lives and how to achieve it.

5. Was the observance of the Sabbath day to be a special sign of identification between God and His people? Exodus 31:13,Exodus 31:16-17. Did God also make Sabbath observance a separate covenant with His people? Exodus 31:16. Was it to be a perpetual covenant, binding forever? Exodus 31:16-17.

COMMENT: SO that the ancient Israelites would especially remember that the eternal God is Creator, Sustainer and Supreme Ruler over all His creation, God singled out Sabbath observance as the one great sign by which they would always be reminded that He is the Creator, and that they were His chosen people. It was the one commandment that would make Israel especially stand out from all other nations. So God doubly commanded Sabbath observance by making it a separate covenant, or agreement, with His people Israel. (The Sabbath was already one of the Ten Commandments God had given them earlier.) It was to be an everlasting covenant—a sign that would identify the people of God of all generations, including "spiritual Israel" today—Spirit-begotten members of God’s New Testament Church. Notice further:

6. Does the Bible plainly reveal that a real Christian is one who has become a spiritual Israelite—one of Abraham’s "seed" through Jesus Christ? Galatians 3:28-29;Romans 4:16.

COMMENT: God made the special Sabbath covenant with Abraham’s physical descendants. It was to be obeyed throughout their generations. Today, all Spirit-begotten Christians have become Abraham’s spiritual descendants and therefore keep the Sabbath! The Sabbath is a reminder of our Creator, who not only created the universe, but who is also creating His holy, righteous character in Spirit-begotten Christians—character that will endure forever when they are born into His divine Family! Thus the Sabbath reminds us every week of the Creator God and His wonderful purpose for mankind.

7. Did Jesus Christ keep the Sabbath? Luke 4:16,Luke 4:31.

COMMENT: Jesus regularly attended religious services on the Sabbath day. He obeyed His own command to meet for worship services every Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3). This is the day He would naturally observe, because He is the One who made the Sabbath and ordained that it be kept holy!

8. Was it also the Apostle Paul’s custom to keep the Sabbath? Acts 17:1-2.Is there other evidence that the early New Testament Church observed the Sabbath? Acts 13:13-16,Acts 13:42, Acts 13:44;Acts 18:1,Acts 18:4.

COMMENT: There is no question that the early New Testament Church of God observed the seventh-day Sabbath. Those who are striving to obey God today will also be keeping the same day Jesus, Paul and the entire early Church kept.

9. What is God’s warning to us in Hebrews 3:8-12,Hebrews 3:17-19? (Notice the word rest in Hebrews 3:11 and Hebrews 3:18) Was rebellion, especially Sabbath breaking, the reason God did not allow an entire generation of Israelites to enter His "rest"? Ezekiel 20:12-13,Ezekiel 20:15-16.

COMMENT: The land of Canaan—the promised "rest" Israel finally entered (Joshua 1:13)--is referred to in the Bible as a type of the Christian’s spiritual "rest"—of being born into the Kingdom or Family of God and living forever.

10. If we believe and obey God, will we enter God’s "rest"—eternal life in His Kingdom? Hebrews 4:3,first nine words, and Hebrews 4:11.

COMMENT: The equation is clear: Belief in God equals active obedience. Those who really believe God will be keeping His Sabbath!

God’s Sabbath should not be treated lightly or forgotten. We are commanded to "Remember the Sabbath day" (Exodus 20:8)because it is a memorial of God’s restoration of the earth and the creation of man. And the Sabbath pictures the coming eternal "rest" that true Christians will enter when born into the Family of God as spirit-composed children of God. They will then be free of all the physical weaknesses and limitations of this mortal life.

11. Did God command the entire nation of Israel to meet together (a "convocation") on the weekly Sabbath? Leviticus 23:3.What are New Testament Christians admonished regarding the assembling of themselves? Hebrews 10:25.

COMMENT: God’s people today attend weekly Sabbath services of the Worldwide Church of God in more than 50 nations around the world. Every Sabbath, they meet together to receive spiritual instruction from the Bible, taught by the ministry of God’s Church (Ephesians 4:11-13).

God’s people rejoice in His Sabbath and enjoy fellowshipping with each other on this day. They are learning what a great blessing it is to keep God’s Sabbath holy—the day that reminds us of the Creator God and His stupendous purpose for mankind! The Passover

Most Bible commentators and scholars agree that the many passing references to God’s annual festivals in the New Testament indicate that their observance in the early Church was known, accepted—even taken for granted. More importantly, Christ and the Church of God customarily kept the annual festivals: "In the early Christian church the propriety of celebrating the festivals together with the whole of the Jewish people was never questioned, so that it needed no special mention" (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1, p. 628).

However, it is obvious from a study of the New Testament that God’s annual festivals took on a new significance in the apostolic Church of God. Jesus’ teaching and example gave new understanding about the meaning of these days and how they are to be observed.

Notice what The Encyclopaedia Britannica says about the early New Testament Church of God keeping the biblical festivals in a new and different way: "The sanctity of special times [such as Easter and Christmas] was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians... [who] continued to observe the Jewish festivals [of Leviticus 23:1-44], though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed" (vol. 8, p. 828, 11th edition, emphasis ours).

1. Who does the Bible say originated these annual festivals, besides the weekly festival of the Sabbath? Leviticus 23:1-4.Did God specifically state that His annual feasts were to be observed in addition to the weekly Sabbath? Leviticus 23:37-38.

COMMENT: Notice that these are not the "feasts of the Jews" or "feasts of Moses," as some have thought. They are God’s own feasts, which God instituted and gave to His people to keep annually.

2. What is the first festival to be observed each year? Leviticus 23:5.When did God institute the first Passover? Read and summarize Exodus 12:1-14,Exodus 12:21-27.

COMMENT: The Passover, the first of God’s commanded annual festivals, pictures the beginning—the very first step—in God’s great Master Plan of salvation for mankind. The Passover was to be a yearly reminder of God’s intervention in delivering the Israelites’ firstborn from death. It also pictured, in advance, the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "our Passover" lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7;1 Peter 1:18-19), for the sins of mankind. The sparing of the Israelites’ firstborn from the death angel through the shed blood of lambs on that first Passover is a symbolic type of our being spared today from the eternal penalty of sin (Romans 6:23)through Christ’s sacrifice.

After Jesus’ death, the Passover, celebrated with the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine, became a yearly memorial of His sacrifice, for Jesus became the reality that the Passover lamb had foreshadowed.

3. Did God command, before Sinai, that the Passover be kept forever? Exodus 12:14,Exodus 12:24. Did Jesus Christ observe the Passover? John 2:13,John 2:23.

COMMENT: Jesus kept the annual festivals. He, as the God of the Old Testament, was the One who originally gave them to Israel!

4. Did Jesus institute the New Testament Passover, with His 12 disciples present, on the night before He was crucified? Matthew 26:17-20.What was one new command He gave them regarding the observance of the Passover? John 13:1-5,John 13:14-15.

5. Did Peter, at first, refuse to allow Jesus to wash his feet? John 13:6-8. Could Peter have any relationship with Jesus unless he allowed Him to wash his feet? John 13:8. Why did Jesus institute this new observance of foot washing during His last Passover meal? John 13:12-16.

COMMENT: Open-toed sandals were the customary footwear of Jesus' time, and so the feet would become dusty. Foot washing, upon entering a home, was a menial task that only servants performed. By washing their feet, Jesus was illustrating to His disciples that He had come to earth to serve mankind. Shortly afterward, He proved the extent of His extreme service to this world when He gave His very life for the sins of all mankind. Foot washing depicts the attitude of humility and service to others that Christ desires every Christian to have.

6. Did Jesus plainly command His disciples to wash one another's feet? John 13:14-15.Were they to teach the world to do likewise? Matthew 28:19-20.Are those who obey Christ's words by participating in this meaningful ceremony promised a special blessing? John 13:17; ???John 14:23.

7. What completely new way of observing the Passover did Jesus institute shortly before His death? Matthew 26:26-29.What command did He give the disciples regarding this new manner of keeping the Passover? Luke 22:19-20.Were they to teach this to the world? Matthew 28:19-20.

COMMENT: Jesus did not abolish the Passover—He merely changed the symbols used. Instead of annually shedding the blood of a lamb and eating its roasted body, we are now to use unleavened bread and wine. The New Testament Passover is to be kept as an annual memorial of Christ's death. It reaffirms year by year "till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26)the true Christian's faith in the blood of "Christ our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7)for the remission of sins, as symbolized by the drinking of wine.

Eating the broken bread symbolizes our faith in the body of Christ, broken open for our physical healing. Jesus Christ allowed His body to be ripped open in dozens of places by scourging until He could not even be recognized! He suffered this torture so we, through faith in His broken body for us, may have the forgiveness of our physical sins—the healing of our bodies when we are sick (Isaiah 53:5;1 Peter 2:24;Psalms 103:2-3;James 5:14-15)--in addition to the forgiveness of our spiritual sins through His shed blood. And so the broken unleavened bread is a reminder to us that it is by "his stripes we are healed." As Christ Himself commanded, true Christians today observe the Passover on the eve of the day of His suffering and death—on the 14th day of the first month of God's calendar, in the evening, after the beginning of the day.

(The exact date for the Passover, and all of God's annual festivals, varies from year to year according to the Roman calendar. The correct dates for all the festivals over the next several years

are listed in God’s Sacred Calendar, which you may request by sending in the literature request coupon included with this lesson.)

8. Did the Apostle Paul teach New Testament Christians to keep the Passover by partaking of the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine, as Jesus had done and commanded? 1 Corinthians 5:7-8;1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

COMMENT: The Church Jesus built kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread—not Easter. ("Easter" in Acts 12:4 in the King James Version is a flagrant mistranslation of the Greek word pascha. It should be rendered "Passover," as it is in all modern translations.)

9. Will the Passover be kept by Christ and others after He establishes the Kingdom of God on earth? Matthew 26:29;Luke 22:15-16.In the meantime, was the Passover to be kept as a memorial of Christ’s death? Review 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.

COMMENT: Jesus commanded His disciples to keep the Passover in remembrance of Him until He returns. The apostles did keep it, and today, God’s true Church still keeps the Passover!

Feast of Unleavened Bread The Passover, the first of God’s commanded annual festivals, pictures the beginning, the very first step, in God’s great Master Plan of salvation for mankind. It was Jesus Christ, "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7), who suffered and died for our sins. But accepting Christ’s sacrifice to pay for our sins is not enough.

Once we have repented of our sins and been forgiven by God, we must strive to forsake sin completely. We must come out of this world’s ways of sin (Revelation 18:4)--just as Israel left Egypt, a type of sin (Hebrews 11:25-26). We must be striving to put all sin away from us. That is our part in God’s Master Plan. To help keep us in the knowledge of the second step in God’s plan, Christ gave His Church the second annual feast. The observance of this feast impresses upon us that we must strive not to return to the sins Jesus paid for with His shed blood. Let’s understand.

1. What feast did God command the Israelites to keep immediately after the Passover? Exodus 12:17;Leviticus 23:6.Were they to keep it just this one time? Exodus 12:17;Exodus 13:10.

COMMENT: Notice that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was given by God before the people reached Mt. Sinai—before they even left the land of Egypt. It is also to be kept by all their succeeding generations—forever!

2. For how many days is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to continue? Exodus 12:15;Exodus 34:18;Numbers 28:16-17;Deuteronomy 16:3-4.Were the first and seventh days set apart as Holy Days—days on which the people were to assemble themselves, much the same as they would on a weekly Sabbath day? Exodus 12:16;Leviticus 23:3,Leviticus 23:7-8.

COMMENT: The first month of the Hebrew calendar, which God inspired the Jews to preserve for New Testament Christians, was called Abib or, later, Nisan. It falls sometime during the months of March and April of the Roman calendar today. The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th of Abib, the day after the Passover. It continues for seven days until the 21st of Abib. Both the 15th and the 21st are special Sabbaths—annual "holy convocations"—days of rest and worship of God. At this point it would be well to distinguish between God’s annual festivals or feasts, and His annual Holy Days or Sabbaths. God’s Master Plan includes seven annual festivals. Two of these,

the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles, are seven days long. There are also seven annual Holy Days, which are Sabbaths of rest from regular work. Each of these Holy Days occurs on, or during, a festival (the Feast of Unleavened Bread has two). But the Passover, the first of the festivals, is not a Holy Day or Sabbath. (See chart below.) God's Annual Festivals (See.Leviticus 23:1-44)

Feast

Feast

Feast

Feast

Feast

Feast

Feast

Passover

Unl. Bread

Pentecost

Trumpets

Atonement

Tabernacles

Last Great Day

3. Were the Israelites to put all leaven and leavened food out of their homes and property, and keep it out during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Exodus 12:15-19;Exodus 13:7.

COMMENT: A leavening agent is any substance used to cause dough to rise by fermentation. Yeast, baking soda and baking powder are leavening agents.

4. Is leaven clearly a symbol for sin? Matthew 16:6,Matthew 16:11-12; Luke 12:1;1 Corinthians 5:8.

COMMENT: Leaven is often referred to in the Bible as a type of sin. Leaven puffs up—and so does sin. Unleavened bread is a flat bread that contains no leavening agent, and therefore typifies the absence of sin. And since seven is God's special number signifying completion and perfection, the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread remind us that God wants His people to strive to put sin completely out of their lives.

5. Does God specifically command His people to eat unleavened bread during this festival? Exodus 12:15,Exodus 12:19-20; Leviticus 23:6.

COMMENT: The Israelites were not merely to remove all leavening and leavened foods from their property. That would have only symbolized putting away sin. They were commanded to eat unleavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This act of eating unleavened bread symbolizes the opposite of sin—active obedience to God!

6. Upon repentance and baptism, Christ's sacrifice blots out all of one's past sins. When Paul asked if we should continue in sin, what did he answer? Romans 6:15-16.What was his apostolic command? Romans 6:11-13.

COMMENT: Christ died so that we would not have to pay the penalty of eternal death (Romans 6:23). After repentance and baptism, God expects us to strive to obey His Law—to "unleaven" our lives. God does not want us to continue in sin, for Christ is not the minister of sin (Galatians 2:17).

7. Did Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, say New Testament Christians should keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:8.

8. What did Paul say that clearly shows the Church of God at Corinth was, at the time he wrote, keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:7. Notice the words "as ye are unleavened."

COMMENT: The Apostle Paul was telling the Corinthian church members to put out spiritual leaven, just as they had already put out all physical leaven in preparation for this festival. They were to keep the Feast not only with unleavened bread, but also with the spiritually "unleavened" attitude of sincerity and truth.

9. Does God want Christians to forsake this world's way of sin? Revelation 18:4.Are we to continually strive—to expend effort and energy—to put sin out of our lives as it crops up? Hebrews 12:1,Hebrews 12:4.

COMMENT: If we are to become Spirit-born members of God's Family, we must prove that we will obey God here and now by striving to get the spiritual leaven of sin out of our lives and keep it out! This is our part in God's great Master Plan.

Hence, every spring the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread specially reminds Spirit-begotten Christians of their continual need to keep God's commandments. It is a time when they symbolically renew their resolve to live in harmony with God's Law—to rededicate their lives to continual spiritual growth and overcoming.

Pentecost—Feast of Firstfruits

God knows that to successfully put sin out of our lives and keep it out, our own human willpower and abilities are not enough. We need the spiritual power of God's Holy Spirit to help us keep God's spiritual Law. This is the third step in God's Master Plan, pictured by the third annual festival, the day of Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks or Feast of Firstfruits.

1. What were God's instructions regarding this festival? Leviticus 23:15-17,Leviticus 23:20. Was this feast a Holy Day, or Sabbath of rest, on which the people were to assemble? Leviticus 23:21. Was it to be kept by God's people every year forever? Same verse.

COMMENT: At this point we need to understand the symbolism of a ceremony associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and how it ties in with the third annual festival. The meaning of this ceremony is important, although it no longer occurs since the Romans destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70.

2. What kind of offering had to be presented to God before the spring harvest could begin? Leviticus 23:9-11, Leviticus 23:14.

COMMENT: As explained in the introduction of this lesson, God established His festivals in conjunction with the two annual agricultural harvests in the land of Palestine. God uses these harvests as a pattern for the two spiritual "harvests" of His great Master Plan. The physical harvests help us understand that God is not dealing with the vast majority of the world today. God is calling only a very few into His Church before Christ's Second Coming. God intends the spring festivals to illustrate to His Church yearly that His Spirit-begotten children are the "firstfruits" of salvation (James 1:18)--the relatively small beginning of His spiritual harvest of mankind into His divine Family. The spring harvest began in the following manner: On the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a sheaf of newly cut barley, cut the night before, was prepared and brought to the priest, who waved it in the air to be accepted by God. This was called the "wavesheaf offering" and represented the first of the firstfruits harvest.

Once the wavesheaf was offered, the harvest could begin. The spring harvest ended by the time of the Feast of Firstfruits, 50 days later. (The New Testament name for this festival, Pentecost, literally means "fiftieth [day].") The people gathered on this annual Sabbath to give God thanks for the firstfruits of the year's crops He had given them. Now let's see the interesting connection between the wavesheaf offering and, Jesus Christ.

3. Who was the first to be resurrected from the dead into God's Family? Acts 26:23.Was He therefore the first of the firstfruits of God's spiritual harvest? 1 Corinthians 15:20,1 Corinthians 15:23; Colossians 1:18.Therefore, are Spirit-begotten Christians clearly the firstfruits of God's great Master Plan? James 1:18;Romans 8:23.

4. After Christ was resurrected from the dead, did He have to ascend to His Father in heaven? John 20:17.On that same day after returning from heaven, could His disciples then touch Him? Compare Matthew 28:9 with John 20:19-20,John 20:27-28.

COMMENT: This was the first day of the week (Sunday) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was on the very same morning that the wavesheaf was offered that Jesus Christ was accepted by His Father as the spiritual "wavesheaf" offering in heaven!

Christ therefore fulfilled the symbolism of the Old Testament wavesheaf offering. He was the first resurrected Son of God—the first harvested product of God's Master Plan. He became the firstborn Son of God—the first human to complete the process of salvation and be "born again." But Jesus could not have become the captain of our salvation and our elder brother without possessing an all-important ingredient from God— something we all must have if we are to be born again as He was.

5. Could Jesus do any spiritual works, including obedience to God, with just His human strength? John 5:30;John 8:28.Where did He get the necessary power? John 14:10,last part.

COMMENT: The Father "dwelt" in Jesus through the Holy Spirit!

6. Did Christ promise the same spiritual help to His disciples? John 14:16.What is the "Comforter"? John 14:26.

7. On what day did the disciples actually receive God’s Holy Spirit? Acts 2:1-4.Did they thus become members of God’s spiritual Church? 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.

COMMENT: Fifty days after Christ was accepted in heaven, the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples just as Jesus had promised. It was on the day of Pentecost that God sent His Spirit to begin His Church—to beget and strengthen the firstfruits He was beginning to call into His Church, symbolically represented by the two "wave loaves" mentioned in Leviticus 23:17,Leviticus 23:20. The New Testament festival of Pentecost is now a memorial that commemorates the founding of the New Testament Church of God through the receiving of the Holy Spirit. It was on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31 that the initial firstiruits of God’s spiritual harvest began to be prepared by His Spirit for "reaping" into God’s divine Family.

Lesson 23 Part 2

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 23Part 2 Why Christians Should Keep God’s Holy Days Feast of Trumpets But the firstfruits cannot be reaped into God’s Family unless they are "born again" (John 3:3-8)--resurrected and changed into spirit. That will not occur until Jesus Christ comes again, which brings us to the fourth step in God’s Master Plan. The Feast of Trumpets portrays a pivotal event in God’s plan. This festival not only pictures the coming of Christ to resurrect and change the firstfruits, it also pictures the terrible time of world war just ahead and the intervention of Jesus Christ to save humanity from total annihilation, as well as to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Let’s understand exactly how this festival fits into God’s great Master Plan.

1. When is the fourth annual festival to be observed? Leviticus 23:23-25.Is this another annual Sabbath of rest from one’s regular work? Leviticus 23:24-25. Are God’s people commanded to meet together before Him on this Holy Day? Leviticus 23:24.

COMMENT: The number seven in God’s plan signifies completion and perfection. The seventh month of God’s calendar contains the final four festivals, picturing the completion of God’s Master Plan for mankind. The festival that occurs on the first day of this month marks the beginning of the final events in God’s plan.

2. Was this festival to be a memorial of blowing of trumpets? Leviticus 23:24.

COMMENT: It is from this ceremony that the Feast of Trumpets draws its name. There is a great deal of symbolic meaning tied in with the blowing of these trumpets—especially with regard to the end time in which we’re living.

Trumpets were blown to announce God’s festivals, as well as to call God’s people to assembly. Trumpets were also used as an alarm of invading armies and impending warfare. This terrifying sound filled the people of ancient Israel with fear, because they knew the horror of war was imminent! It is this warning of war that sets apart the Feast of Trumpets from God’s other festivals.

3. When did Jesus say that God’s coming Kingdom would be established— wouldn’t it be in a time of world war? Matthew 24:3,Matthew 24:6-8; Luke 21:31.Would man then have the power to destroy all human life from the face of the earth? Matthew 24:21-22.

4. What does the book of Revelation say regarding the blowing of supernatural trumpets shortly before the return of Jesus Christ? Revelation 8:1-2,Revelation 8:6.

COMMENT: The seventh seal that covered the scroll (Revelation 5:1), when opened, disclosed seven angels with seven trumpets representing seven consecutive colossal world events. These are to be physical punishments from God to warn the nations not to go further into national and personal sins. The last three trumpet plagues (also called "woes") specifically picture three phases of catastrophic world war. At the third, mankind will be saved from extinction by the Second

Coming of Jesus Christ!

5. Will those who turn to God be protected from these trumpet plagues? Revelation 3:10;Revelation 7:2-3;Revelation 12:14.Is it for the sake of the "elect" that Christ will intervene in world affairs to cut short the time of great trouble and rescue mankind from nuclear annihilation? Matthew 24:22.

COMMENT: The elect of God are the firstfruits of His great Master Plan. They are the ones God has called out of this world to be the "firstfruits harvest" of the divine Family He is creating.

6. Did Jesus promise to send His angels to gather together His elect at the blast of a great trumpet? Matthew 24:30-31. Is the sounding of this trumpet the time of the resurrection of the dead in Christ? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17;1 Corinthians 15:51-52;Revelation 11:15-18.Is this trumpet the seventh and final one of the seven introduced in Revelation 8:1-13? 1 Corinthians 15:52.

COMMENT: At the sound of the seventh trumpet, announcing the return of Jesus Christ, the firstfruits of God’s plan will be resurrected and changed—born as immortal spirit beings into the Family of God! God will then have reaped the smaller spiritual harvest of individuals into His Family. They will then begin to help Christ rule the earth (Revelation 20:6)and reap the much greater spiritual harvest during and after the Millennium. The last three festivals picture the details of how this will be accomplished.

Day at Atonement What about Satan? What happens to him after Christ returns? The fifth step in God’s Master Plan, the Day of Atonement, reveals the answer. It pictures Christ deposing Satan the devil from his present position as world ruler (2 Corinthians 4:4)and Satan’s removal to a place completely away from mankind. He will be bound for 1,000 years, no longer able to deceive the nations and influence man to sin. After Satan’s imprisonment, the rest of humanity will be reconciled— made at one—with God. Let’s understand the meaning in the symbolism of this unique fifth festival of God.

1. What annual Sabbath follows only nine days after the Feast of Trumpets? Leviticus 23:27;Leviticus 16:29-31.Are God’s people commanded to assemble before Him on this day? Leviticus 23:27.

2. How are we to observe the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 23:32. How does one "afflict" his body on this day? Isaiah 58:3;Ezra 8:21.

COMMENT: The Day of Atonement is perhaps the most unusual Holy Day, as far as what God expects us to do. It is the one day of the year on which God commands us to fast—to abstain from food and water (Exodus 34:28;Esther 4:16)--for 24 hours, from sunset on the ninth day of the month to sunset on the tenth day ("from even [in"] unto even [ing]"—Leviticus 23:32).

Fasting for spiritual reasons at any time of the year should be for the purpose of humbling ourselves—to draw closer to God and His righteous way (Isaiah 58:6-11). Thus fasting on the Day of Atonement is a vivid reminder of the state of mind necessary for salvation—of humility, godly sorrow, earnestly seeking after God and His way—a condition to which this world will have been brought by the catastrophic events culminating in Jesus Christ’s return!

3. Does the Day of Atonement also differ from all other annual Holy Days in that no work of any kind is to be done on it? Numbers 29:7;Leviticus 16:29.Why is this day to be kept so solemnly? Leviticus 23:28.

COMMENT: What does the word atonement mean? Webster says to atone means to "set at one." To join in one—to form by uniting. This day actually symbolizes God and man being set at one: literally the Day of At-one-ment! But God and mankind cannot be fully at one—in full agreement—until Satan is restrained.

Leviticus 16:1-34 details what God told the Levitical priesthood to do on the Day of Atonement. These rituals, although no longer performed, reveal another step in God's plan to restore His government on earth and to bring saving knowledge to everyone.

4. Was the Aaronic high priest to make a special sin offering once a year to atone for all the sins of Israel? Leviticus 16:32-34.Was this done on the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 16:29-30.

5. But before the high priest made this atonement, did he take two goats and then cast lots to determine who each would represent? Leviticus 16:7-8.Was one to represent Christ, the LORD? Leviticus 16:8. Who was the other goat to represent? Same verse. Was he to be banished? Leviticus 16:10.

COMMENT: The English word "scapegoat" is not), a correct translation of the Hebrew word God inspired. Most Bibles with marginal renderings show that the original word was azazel. Azazel among the early desert dwellers in the Sinai referred to Satan the devil!

6. Was the goat representing Christ offered as a sin offering for all the people? Leviticus 16:15-16. Were the sins of the people symbolically placed on the head of the other goat, representing Satan, which was then taken into the wilderness? Leviticus 16:21-22.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ atoned for our sins when He took the penalty of our sins (death—Romans 6:23)upon Himself by sacrificing His sinless life for us. But the real cause of those sins is Satan the devil (John 8:42-44). In this Levitical ritual, all of man's Satan-inspired sins were symbolically put right back on Satan's head where they belong! When Jesus Christ returns, the blame for mankind's sins will be placed squarely on Satan, who will then be removed from the presence of man. Notice the fulfillment of this part of God's Master Plan as revealed by Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation:

7. What will be done to Satan after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? Revelation 20:1-2.Where will he be cast? Revelation 20:3. Also notice Revelation 18:1-2.COMMENT: The "bottomless pit" or abyss was pictured by the desert wilderness where the azazel goat was banished. Satan and his demons will be completely restrained by Christ from further leading mankind into sin. No longer will Satan be able to broadcast (Ephesians 2:2)his evil attitudes. At the devil's chaining by an angel of God (symbolically the "fit man" of Leviticus 16:21), the minds of men, formerly kept spiritually closed by Satan, will be opened by the Spirit of God! For the first time, humanity will be able to understand God's Master Plan of salvation. People will then begin to realize their wrong ways and desire to repent and receive forgiveness of their sins. Only then will man become at one with Christ and the Father, as pictured by the Day of At-one-ment!

Feast of Tabernacles 1. What God-ordained festival occurs only five days after the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 23:34;Deuteronomy 16:13-15.

2. Does this seven-day feast begin with a Holy Day on which all ordinary work is forbidden, and on which people are to gather before God? Leviticus 23:35.Did God command that this annual festival be kept forever? Leviticus 23:41.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16;Exodus 34:22)because it celebrated the summer and early autumn harvest (Leviticus 23:39).

3. What is the divinely set theme for the annual observance of the Feast of Tabernacles? Deuteronomy 16:14-15.Does God say that good food should be eaten to increase one's joy and happiness during this feast? Deuteronomy 14:26.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the sixth step in God's Master Plan, is a time of great rejoicing! For ancient Israel, it was a time of rejoicing because the abundant winter's store was taken in just before the Feast. But in the Millennium, which this feast pictures, the happiness, joy and prosperity portrayed by the Feast of Tabernacles will exist worldwide under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ. Universal adherence to God's way of life will make the World Tomorrow a literal utopia!

4. Are God's people to live in booths—temporary dwellings—during the Feast? Leviticus 23:42.

COMMENT: A "tabernacle" or "booth" is a temporary dwelling. God commanded the ancient Israelites to live in temporary shelters made of tree branches (Leviticus 23:40) while observing the Feast of Tabernacles. For God's people who attend the Feast of Tabernacles today, a tent, camper, motel or hotel room would certainly qualify as a temporary dwelling.

God intends the Feast of Tabernacles to separate and free His people from the world. Living in temporary dwellings for an entire week—away from their everyday surroundings, jobs and most negative influences—God's people enjoy a tiny foretaste of the universal freedom, joy and peace that will exist in the Millennium when Satan is gone and the Spirit of God is leading all of humanity (Joel 2:28,Joel 2:32).

These are days of continuous, genuine Christian fellowship and just plain good fun! Tens of thousands of God's people and their families gather at dozens of festival sites around the world. Christians at the Feast demonstrate now, by the way they live together in harmony, what today's sin-filled, unhappy world will become like after Christ returns. But just as the Feast of Tabernacles is a physical feast filled with rejoicing, it is also a spiritual feast of education and preparation. Members of God's Church receive instruction from God's ministers through inspiring sermons to help them further prepare to rule and teach with Christ during the Millennium.

5. After Jesus Christ subdues the warring nations at His return and establishes God's government over the earth, will the nations begin to come to Him for instruction in God's way of life? Micah 4:1-2.Will the whole world finally come to understand God's way to peace, happiness, abundant living and salvation? Isaiah 11:9;Jeremiah 31:34.

COMMENT: Once Satan has been bound and the government of God set up, a 1,000-year golden age of world peace and prosperity will begin. Christ's reeducation program for the entire world will bring about a new civilization based on God's way of life—His Law of love—resulting in great physical and spiritual blessings.

6. But what will happen to those nations that at first refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and thus refuse to be reeducated to God's way? Zechariah 14:16-17.And if they still won't obey? Zechariah 14:18-19.

COMMENT: Christ will reeducate the people of the world through His annual festivals. The world will come to know that God's Master Plan pictures the way to physical blessings and spiritual salvation. Those who stubbornly refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles will suffer from drought and plagues until they submit to God.

7. Is there to be any end to the increase of God's government? Isaiah 9:7.

COMMENT: World population will increase rapidly in the Millennium. Eventually thousands of millions will be spiritually converted! The great "autumn harvest" of humans will be gathered into the Kingdom of God—born again as divine members of the ruling Family of God during the Millennium. By the end of the thousand years, the great Family of God will be ready for the final step in God's Master Plan. Even greater joy and accomplishments lie ahead after the Millennium! The Last Great Day

What about all those who have lived and died without ever being called of God (including, perhaps, most of your loved ones today)--who never had an opportunity to know and really understand God's purpose and plan for mankind? Are they lost forever? The answer is revealed in the meaning of the Last Great Day—the seventh and last of God's annual festivals—the festival that pictures the seventh and final step in God's great Master Plan.

1. Is it God's will that all who have ever lived come to the knowledge of His plan of salvation? 2 Peter 3:9;1 Timothy 2:4.

COMMENT: In His loving concern for all mankind, God has planned for everyone who has ever lived to receive an opportunity for salvation and Sonship in His Family, just as the already spiritually called and begotten children of God have been given their opportunity.

Just as the week is not complete without the seventh-day Sabbath, God's Master Plan is not complete without His seventh and final annual festival. The number seven in the Bible signifies completion and perfection. This seventh festival of God reveals the perfection of God's great Master Plan— that God's love and mercy toward mankind will extend beyond the Millennium.

2. Was there an eighth day of worship immediately following the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles? Leviticus 23:36,Leviticus 23:39.

COMMENT: The last annual Sabbath or Holy Day is observed immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. But because of its close proximity to this seven-day Feast, it was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and was called the "eighth day." It came to be known among Christians as "the last day, that great day of the feast" (John 7:37). The Last Great Day is clearly a separate festival and Holy Day. The Last Great Day pictures the completion of God's Master Plan. That, as

we learned in Lesson 21, is the Great White Throne Judgment period after the Millennium. Revelation 20:5 shows that a second resurrection will occur after the Millennium, and Revelation 20:11-12 reveal that those in this resurrection to mortal life, who died never having been called to participate in God's plan of salvation, will then be given their opportunity to become members of God's divine ruling Family.

These individuals will be given enough time to learn to obey God, just as Spirit-begotten Christians have opportunity to do today. Those who continue to live God's way of life, developing the character of God, will be changed from mortality to immortality at the end of this period of judgment, which apparently will last 100 years (Isaiah 65:20).

3. How did Jesus refer to this special "day" or period of judgment for these people who have yet to hear and understand the wonderful message of salvation? Matthew 11:20-24;Matthew 12:41-42.

COMMENT: Christ mentioned the people of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom, Nineveh in Jonah's time and finally the Queen of the south. All of these examples of people who lived in different generations are compared to those of Jesus' day, the vast majority of whom did not understand or believe Christ's message. Jesus tells us that they all will be resurrected with the generation that lived during His time!

Jesus gave enough examples of people living at widespread times to prove that most of humanity will be alive at the same time on this earth. There will be pre-Flood men and women, all 12 tribes of Israel, those who lived during the Middle Ages and the vast majority living now. Even babies and children who died untimely deaths will be resurrected then. They will all rise in the second resurrection because they had not been called by God during their first life. The ancient peoples Jesus mentioned in Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50 would have repented if He had personally come to them in their day. And they will repent when resurrected and given access to the Holy Spirit after the Millennium. Your Bible shows that the vast majority of those who ever lived will finally be born into God's Family at the end of this coming period of judgment, pictured by the Last Great Day.

God's Master Plan of salvation for mankind will then be complete.

Then the spirit-composed members of God's great ruling Family can look forward to new heavens and a new earth—and to new and wonderful opportunities in ruling the universe under God our Father and Jesus Christ our elder brother!

Christ the Focus of God's Holy Days

Through the years, God's Church has grown in the understanding of the spiritual meaning of God's Holy Days. Unlike the days commonly observed by traditional Christianity today, God's days reveal His great purpose for mankind and how He is accomplishing it. In this overview lesson, we learned that Christ, our Creator, is fashioning us into God's spiritual character image to become members of His divine Kingdom, as pictured by the weekly Sabbath. We also learned that God's annual festivals not only teach us His Master Plan of salvation, they point us directly to our Savior, Jesus Christ. He is "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7). It is by "putting on" Christ that we put sin out of our lives (Romans 13:13-14), as pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Christ is the first of the "firstfruits," and it was 50 days after His resurrection that He sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was sent to spiritually beget those whom the Father would call, thus enabling them to obey His Law, successfully overcome sin in their lives and grow spiritually.

Christ will return to earth to intervene in world affairs (pictured by the Feast of Trumpets), resurrect His firstfruits, and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords, putting down the despotic rule of Satan, the archdeceiver, as portrayed by the Day of Atonement. With the influence of the devil and his demons gone, all mankind will have the opportunity to become "at one" with Christ through repentance, baptism and the receipt of God's Spirit.

Christ is coming to set up the government of God on earth, making it a veritable utopia—pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles. Thousands of millions will be Spirit-begotten and born into the Family of God during the Millennium.

Finally, Christ will make salvation available to everyone who ever lived, but never heard or understood the truth, in the last great step in God's plan—the Last Great Day, picturing the last judgment period.

God's Church understands and teaches the precious truth concerning His purpose and plan for mankind. Around the world, Spirit-begotten children of God faithfully observe His weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days every year!

Remember that with the next lesson we will begin our expanded study of each of God's Holy Days. Lesson 24 will cover the seventh-day Sabbath in-depth. Not only will the points brought out in this lesson's brief study of the weekly Sabbath be covered in greater detail, we will also answer questions such as: How is the Sabbath a special "test" commandment? Has time been "lost"? Did God change the seventh-day Sabbath to another day? How can we make God's weekly Sabbath a spiritual blessing and delight?

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. God gave His people weekly and annual Sabbaths that A. no longer have meaning or purpose. B. were patterned after pagan festivals. C. are reminders of His purpose and plan for bringing mortal humans into His divine Family. D. are not to be observed by true Christians today.

2. Which statement is FALSE? A. The land called Canaan in ancient times produces abundant harvests throughout the year. B. The spring grain harvest in the modern state of Israel is the smaller of the two annual harvest seasons. C. God's festivals during the spring harvest season picture the relatively small beginning of God's spiritual harvest of humans into His Family. D. The

festivals that occur near the conclusion of the late summer-early autumn harvest season picture God calling the vast majority of mankind to salvation.

3. The "oracles"—the Old Testament Scriptures, which include knowledge of God's Sahbaths and festivals and God's calendar—were given to ancient Israel and preserved by the tribe of Judah A. until the coming of Christ, who did away with the Law. B. because they were only for the Jews. C. to help the Jews earn salvation. D. for God's New Testament Spirit-begotten Church.

4. After renewing the face of the earth in six days, God (the Word, who became Jesus Christ) rested on the seventh day A. because He was tired from all His work. B. to set an example for humans to follow. C.—known today as Sunday. D.—known today as Friday.

5. If we keep the Sabbath as God intends, it A. gives us extra time to learn more about God and His awesome purpose for our lives. B. is a sign reminding us that He is the Creator and we are His chosen people. C. is a type of our future spiritual "rest" as Spirit-born members of God's divine Kingdom or Family. D. All of the above.

6. Since God's Spirit-begotten children—true Christians—have become Abraham's spiritual descendants, they A. keep God's weekly Sabbath— Saturday, the seventh day of the week. B. keep every day of the week "holy." C. no longer need to keep any day. D. keep Sunday, the first day of the week.

7. The New Testament references to God's annual festivals indicate that the Church Jesus Christ founded A. knew it was no longer necessary to observe these festivals. B. observed God's festivals, just as Christ had done and commanded His chosen people to do. C. observed these festivals only in Judea. D. celebrated Easter and Christmas.

8. Which statement about the first of God's seven annual festivals is FALSE? The Passover A. was originally a yearly reminder of God's deliverance of Israel's firstborn from death. B. pictured, in advance, the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of mankind. C. was to be kept forever and is now an annual memorial of Christ's suffering and death. D. commemorates Christ's resurrection.

9. Shortly before His crucitixion, Jesus A. instituted the sacrament of communion, and told His disciples to observe it every Sunday morning. B. changed the Passover symbols to unleavened bread and wine. C. told His disciples to commemorate His birth and resurrection. D. explained to His disciples that His death would do away with the annual festivals.

10. Which statement about the New Testament Passover is FALSE? A. The new symbols Jesus gave on the eve of His death were for the apostles only. B. Foot washing, which Jesus instituted before taking the bread and wine, depicts the attitude of humility and service every true Christian should have. C. Eating the unleavened bread symbolizes our faith in the body or Christ, which was broken open for our physical healing. D. Drinking the wine symbolizes our faith in the fact that Christ's blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

11. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the second of God's annual festivals, A. was replaced by Lent through the authority of the apostles. B. shows that accepting Christ's sacrifice to pay for our sins is all that God requires of us. C. reminds us that God wants Christians to be striving to put sin completely out of their lives. D. lasts for eight days.

12. Leaven is a symbol for sin. Therefore A. leaven should never be eaten.B. unleavened bread typifies the presence of sin. C. the Feast of Unleavened Bread shows that God does not want us to "unleaven" our lives spiritually. D. the act of eating unleavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes the opposite of sin—righteousness, which is active obedience to God.

13. Pentecost, the third annual festival and Holy Day, A. reminds us that we need the power of God’s Spirit to overcome sin. B. reminds us that human willpower alone is enough to overcome sin. C. should be observed as a special day for baptisms and confirmations. D. is observed correctly by those churches named after this day.

14. "Pentecost," the New Testament name for the Old Testament "Feast of Firstfruits," A. was observed 50 days after the spring grain harvest began. B. is a memorial of the coming of God’s Spirit to beget and strengthen the "frstfruits" of God’s Master Plan. C. commemorates the beginning of the New Testament Church of God in A.D. 3l. D. All of the above.

15. The festival picturing the fourth step in God’s Master Plan A. marks the completion of events involving the Church. 8. has nothing to do with Christ’s return to earth. C. is the Feast of Trumpets. D. is no longer to be observed today.

16. The fourth of God’s annual festivals A. has no meaning for God’s Church today. B. pictures the return of Jesus Christ to save humanity from total annihilation. C. is a musical festival with little spiritual meaning. D. pictures Christ coming to "rapture" away His saints.

17. The Feast of Trumpets also pictures the A. terrible time of world war just before Christ’s return. B. resurrection of the "firstfruits," who will be reaped into God’s Family. C. first resurrection. D. All of the above.

18. After Christ returns, He will A. begin to qualify to replace Satan. B. depose Satan from being world ruler and restrain him from influencing mankind for 1,000 years. C. allow Satan to rule for another l,000 years. D. allow Satan to continue broadcasting his evil attitudes to mankind.

19. Fasting on the Day of Atonement A. means to abstain from meat but not other foods or water for 24 hours. B. has no connection with becoming at one with God. C. is for the purpose of humbling oneself to draw closer to God. D. is not a vivid reminder or the state of mind necessary for salvation.

20. The symbolism surrounding the azazel goat of Leviticus 16:1-34 pictures A. all sin being blamed on Christ. B. the blame for mankind’s sins being placed on Satan, who inspired them. C. mankind’s sins never being forgiven. D. Satan and his demons being released to further lead mankind into sin.

21. After Christ has returned to earth and put Satan away, He will A. begin the 1,000-year reign of the Kingdom of God on earth. B. return to heaven and let men solve their own problems. C. return to heaven with His saints, leaving the earth desolate for 1,000 years. D. abolish God’s annual Holy Days.

22. During the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, God’s people A. are to live in temporary accommodations such as motel and hotel rooms. B. rejoice greatly, thus picturing the universal

happiness and joy that will exist during the Millennium. C. receive instruction from God’s Word to help them further prepare to rule and teach in the Millennium. D. All of the above.

23. The Last Great Day, the festival immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles, A. pictures the Great White Throne Judgment period, when all who were not yet called by God will be given their opportunity for salvation. B. has no connection with the second resurrection. C. shows how unfair God really is. D. shows that today is indeed the only "day" of salvation.

24. God’s Master Plan for the salvation of all mankind will A. never be complete. B. be complete at Christ’s return. C. be complete after the period of judgment pictured by the Last Great Day. D. is now complete.

25. God’s Holy Days A. point us directly to our Savior, Jesus Christ. B. reveal His great purpose for mankind and how He is accomplishing it. C. are faithfully kept by true Christians. D. All of the above.

Lesson 24 Part 1

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 24 Part 1 The Truth About God’s Holy Sabbath

What is God’s PURPOSE for His weekly Sabbath? Why do so few understand that keeping the Sabbath brings special BLESSINGS? Let’s learn HOW and WHY New Testament Christians are to keep God’s Sabbath day holy. DOES it really matter on which day of the week we worship God? Is the observance of any day of the week in honor of the Creator equally acceptable?

God commands us to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Exodus 20:8-10). But why should we observe God’s holy Sabbath day? What purpose does the seventh-day Sabbath serve in the 20th century space age? And how does one keep it holy?

Created by Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the member of the God Family through whom God created all things (Ephesians 3:9;Hebrews 1:1-2). But did you know that Christ, the Word (John 1:1-3,John 1:14), also "made" the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28)and later kept it as a human?

After finishing His work of renewing the face of the earth and creating all physical life upon it in six days, the Word "rested" on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3;Exodus 20:11). By resting on the seventh day, He "sanctified" it, setting it apart for a special purpose. The word "Sabbath" means rest in Hebrew. God intended the seventh day to be a period of rest and relaxation from our regular work of the previous six days. And so God set the example for mankind by ceasing from all work on the seventh day of what is commonly called creation week. By so doing, He made the Sabbath and set apart every future seventh day as a time of rest for man. But the purpose for keeping God’s Sabbath goes far beyond simply resting from our labors every seventh day.

Why the Sabbath? When God does anything, or makes anything, there is a reason—an important purpose.

God created man and put him here on earth for a purpose. But mankind has lost the knowledge of that great purpose.

God, through the Word, made the Sabbath. But why? What purpose does it serve? Mankind has lost knowledge of that important purpose, too!

Jesus Christ said the Sabbath was "made for man" (Mark 2:27), but He did not then say why, or for what great purpose the Sabbath was made, except to serve and benefit man.

God revealed that important purpose to His chosen people about 1,500 years earlier, shortly after delivering them from slavery in Egypt.

After God spoke the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai and His covenant with Israel had been made complete, God made a totally separate and eternally binding covenant with His people (Exodus 31:12-17).

Notice the conditions of this special covenant: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that cloth sanctify you" (Exodus 31:12-13).

Here, then, is the purpose of the Sabbath. It is a "sign." A sign is a badge, symbol or token of identity. God commanded His people to keep His Sabbath as a sign to identify WHO is their God!

God gave man His Sabbath for the purpose of keeping mankind in the true knowledge and true worship of the true God. The Sabbath points back to the creation of the present physical world (Exodus 20:11;Exodus 31:17), and creation is proof of God’s existence. The very day God set aside for assembly and worship points as a memorial to WHOM we are to worship—the Creator and Ruler of all that is! But that is not all.

Sabbath Identifies God’s People The Sabbath was also given as a sign to identify who are the people of God. Not only does this special covenant say, "...that ye may know that I am the LORD...", but "...that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you" (Exodus 31:13). The word "sanctify" means to set apart for a holy use or purpose. On the seventh day of creation week, the Eternal sanctified—that is, He set apart for a holy use—the Sabbath day. The special Sabbath covenant also reveals that the Sabbath is a sign that the Eternal sanctifies His obedient people—sets them apart from other people—for His holy purpose. In Old Testament times, God’s people were the tribes that composed the nation of Israel. In New Testament times, God’s people are spiritual Israelites (Galatians 3:28-29)--those of His own Spirit-led Church—His Spirit-begotten children. And they are being prepared by God for a holy use. For these "firstfruits" (James 1:18)of God’s Master Plan, the Sabbath foreshadows the completion of God’s spiritual creation in them. It pictures their being BORN into the Kingdom or Family of God to be rulers and teachers of His Word in tomorrow’s world (Revelation 5:10). The Test Commandment In Exodus 16:1-36 we find that Sabbath keeping was a test of the Israelites’ obedience to God. God told Moses He was going to "prove them, whether they will walk in my law" (Exodus 16:4).

God’s sign is one we accept voluntarily. But how many do you know who keep the seventh-day Sabbath? It is obvious to the world when one keeps God’s Sabbath. But most people don’t want to be identified as being different from the world.

Many professing Christians are willing at least to acknowledge that the other nine commandments should be kept, but the one commandment they reject and refuse to keep is the Fourth!

Therefore it is the crucial test of obedience, for it identifies those who have truly surrendered to God—who obey all of His commandments regardless of persecution or cost!

God commands us to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). God is giving us a TEST—an examination relevant to our entrance into eternal life in His Kingdom—every week! What kind of grade is God giving you?

Let’s begin an in-depth study of this most important day of the week to make sure we are passing God’s test.

LESSON 24 God’s Special Creation for Man The seventh-day Sabbath was a unique creation. It was not until God’s physical creation, including man, was complete that the Creator brought the Sabbath into existence. The plain truth about God’s holy Sabbath day begins in the second chapter of Genesis.

1. On which day of what is commonly called creation week did God rest? Genesis 2:1-3;Exodus 20:11.Did God rest because He was tired from all the work He had done during the previous six days? Isaiah 40:28.

COMMENT: God is composed of spirit and therefore never becomes tired. God created or "made" (Mark 2:27)the Sabbath by resting, whereas all else was created and made by working. By resting on the seventh day, God also set an example for mankind to follow.

2. What did God do to the seventh day? Genesis 2:3.

COMMENT: Notice that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. By resting on the seventh day of creation week, God put His divine presence in it, making it holy. Therefore He set it apart from the other six days of the week for a holy use. In so doing, He also made every future seventh day of the week holy!

God established the Sabbath as the time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Each week when that time arrives, we are in holy time! It is GOD’S time, not ours. God made it holy, and in the Fourth Commandment He commands us to keep it holy!

3. Which member of the God Family made that first Sabbath? Colossians 1:13-16;Mark 2:28.Is the seventh-day Sabbath one of the Creator God’s Holy Days? Isaiah 58:13.

COMMENT: As we have proved conclusively from our studies with previous lessons, Jesus Christ was the Lord God who revealed Himself to ancient Israel throughout the Old Testament. God the Father created all things through Him. Jesus Christ is therefore "Lord of the Sabbath" because He made it. So the seventh-day Sabbath is the real "Lord’s Day"!

4. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was made? Mark 2:27.Who would that include? Exodus 20:8-10,especially Exodus 20:10.

COMMENT: "The Sabbath was made for man," declared Jesus. Every seventh day from creation week was set apart by God as time to be specially observed by mankind, regardless of race or nationality. The Sabbath was made for Adam and all of his descendants, including everyone today! The seventh-day Sabbath was to benefit all who would ever live—if they would keep it as God intended.

5. How did God intend the Sabbath to benefit mankind? Deuteronomy 5:14;Exodus 23:12.(Notice the words "rest" and "refreshed.")

COMMENT: The word "Sabbath" means rest in Hebrew, the language in which the Old Testament Scriptures were written. Physical rest and mental relaxation after a busy week are obvious reasons for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. God knew humans would need periodic rest and

change from work. But the purpose for keeping God’s Sabbath goes far beyond simply resting on it and being refreshed physically.

6. Is the Sabbath also a reminder of God’s creation? Exodus 20:8-11,especially Exodus 20:11.

COMMENT: Keeping God’s seventh-day Sabbath every week reminds us that God is the Creator of all that exists, including all of humanity. Thus the Sabbath is a memorial of God’s creation, which includes God’s great spiritual purpose for creating mankind. As we will learn later in this lesson, the Sabbath also pictures our eventual spiritual birth as members in God’s divine Family!

God set aside a special or hallowed one-seventh of the week to be a reminder of Him as Creator and of His purpose for our existence. The Sabbath is time in which we can be spiritually rejuvenated by having close spiritual contact with God. It allows us time to think more about God, to pray to and worship Him (both in private and in fellowship with others), and to study the Bible to understand more about His awesome purpose for our lives and how to achieve it!

Sabbath Day Miraculously Revealed to Israel From the time of creation week until the Exodus (about 2,500 years later), we find no specific mention of the Sabbath in the Bible. Obviously, however, "righteous" Abel (Hebrews 11:4), Enoch (who "pleased God"—verse 5), Noah (a "just man" and a "preacher of righteousness"—Genesis 6:9;2 Peter 2:5), Abraham (the father of the faithful—Romans 4:16), Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and others kept God’s Sabbath. These men were righteous in God’s sight, and righteousness is keeping God’s commandments (Psalms 119:172). Let’s especially notice the example of Abraham.

1. Are we told that Abraham kept God’s Law, which would have included His seventh-day Sabbath? Genesis 26:5.

COMMENT: The patriarchs knew and kept God’s Law. God would not have inspired Moses to write that Abraham kept His commandments, statutes and laws if he had kept the wrong day for the Sabbath or had not kept it at all!

2. Was God confident that Abraham would teach his children to keep His Law? Genesis 18:19.

COMMENT: Isaac kept the seventh-day Sabbath, since Sabbath keeping is a part of God’s Law—His way of life. Jacob (whom God later renamed Israel) also kept the Sabbath, following in his father Isaac’s footsteps. However, by the time of Moses, their descendants, the Israelites, had lost much, if not most, of the knowledge of God’s way.

Recall that after the death of Joseph, the children of Israel became slaves in Egypt, a land in which time was not measured by weeks, but only by months and years. The Israelites were forbidden to worship the true God and forced to work seven days a week. For about a century, they were not permitted to keep the Sabbath. But shortly after delivering them from Egypt, God made it absolutely clear to the Israelites exactly which day is His Sabbath by specially revealing it to them.

3. One month after leaving Egypt, and about two weeks before arriving at Mt. Sinai, where God thundered out the Ten Commandments, what did God promise to give the Israelites? Exodus 16:4.What did they call this bread? Exodus 16:15. (Be sure to read all of Exodus 16:1-36 before going any further.)

4. Was the raining of this bread from heaven also to be a test of the Israelites' willingness to obey God? Exodus 16:4, last part. (Notice that God's Law existed before He spoke the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai.) Were they told not to save manna overnight for the next working day? Exodus 16:19. What happened to the manna the disobedient ones saved for the following day? Exodus 16:20.

5. Were the Israelites to gather twice the normal amount of manna on Friday morning? Exodus 16:5. Was this double portion to be enough for both Friday and Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath? Exodus 16:23.

6. Did the manna saved for the Sabbath stink and breed worms, as it did if saved overnight for any of the previous six days? Exodus 16:24. Was that because God withheld manna from falling on the seventh day, and miraculously preserved the portions saved for the Sabbath? Exodus 16:25-26.

7. But did some of the people disbelieve Moses and disobey God by trying to gather manna on the Sabbath? Exodus 16:27-28. Did God again command them not to work on the Sabbath? Exodus 16:29. What did the people finally do on the Sabbath? Exodus 16:30.

COMMENT: The absence of manna on the seventh day identified exactly which day was the Sabbath on which the Israelites were to rest from all their labors. Thus God miraculously revealed His Sabbath day to them!

Notice that God performed several miracles every week to point out the exact day of the Sabbath to the Israelites. He miraculously gave the people manna on the first six days of the week, including a double portion on the sixth day. And He preserved the leftover portion of Friday's manna so it could be eaten on the Sabbath, since there would be none to gather on the seventh day, thereby giving the people rest from working on His Holy Day.

Every week God vividly reminded the Israelites of His seventh-day Sabbath. He performed these miracles week after week for forty years! (Exodus 16:35.) This clearly shows how important Sabbath keeping is to God! A Sign of Identification

God has a special sign that identifies His people. That sign of identification is His holy Sabbath day. Let's understand how it identifies true Christians today.

1. In addition to commanding the Israelites to keep the Sabbath, revealing by the miracles of manna which day it is, and shortly thereafter including it as one of the Ten Commandments, did the One who later became Jesus Christ make Sabbath keeping an additional and separate covenant or agreement with His people? Exodus 31:12-16,especially Exodus 31:16. Was this covenant to be binding forever? Exodus 31:16-17.

2. Was the Sabbath to be a "sign" between the Creator and His people? Exodus 31:11-13, Exodus 31:17. Would He sanctify—set apart for a holy use—the Sabbath keepers? Exodus 31:13, last part.

COMMENT: A sign identifies. A sign may advertise a business's name and the nature of the business. A sign may also proclaim certain other information. What knowledge does the Sabbath advertise? "That ye may know that I am the LORD" who "made heaven and earth" (Exodus 31:13,Exodus 31:17). The Sabbath identifies who the true God is. It is a reminder of the Creator of

the heavens and earth!

God wanted ancient Israel to be sure to remember that He is Creator, Sustainer and Supreme Ruler over all His creation. So He singled out Sabbath observance as the one great sign by which they would always be reminded of who He is. But this special Sabbath covenant of Exodus 31:1-18 reveals that the Sabbath does more than identify the Creator. It is also a sign that identifies the true people of God: "That ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you" (Exodus 31:13). The Sabbath was to point out who they were—His chosen people. It was the one commandment that would make Israel especially stand out from all other nations. As stated earlier in this lesson, most people do not want to be identified as being different from the world. Most simply will not keep the Fourth Commandment unless they truly want to obey all of God's commandments. Therefore it is the crucial test of obedience today, just as it was for ancient Israel (Exodus 16:4), because it identifies those who have surrendered to God—who obey all of His commandments! And so God doubly commanded Sabbath observance by making it a separate covenant with His people after the covenant commonly called the Old Covenant (which included the Ten Commandments) had been completed, ratified, and put into force and effect. This special Sabbath covenant was to be an everlasting agreement. It was to be the sign that would identify the people of God of all generations, including "spiritual Israel" today—Spirit-begotten members of God's Church.

3. Does the Bible reveal that a real Christian, regardless of race or nationality, is one who has become a spiritual Israelite—one of Abraham's "seed" through Jesus Christ? Galatians 3:28-29;Romans 4:16;Ephesians 2:11-13,Ephesians 2:19.

COMMENT: God made the special Sabbath covenant with Abraham's physical seed—the nation of Israel. It was to be obeyed throughout their generations. Today, all Spirit-begotten children of God—true Christians (Romans 8:9)--regardless of race or national origin, have become Abraham's spiritual descendants, and therefore keep God's Sabbath! They have been set apart ("sanctified"—Exodus 31:13)by God as His people.

However, most religious groups that profess to keep God's seventh-day Sabbath do not keep all of God's commandments. Therefore they are not part of the Church of God, which is composed of Spirit-begotten children of God. Jesus said that His disciples would keep all of His commandments (John 14:15,John 14:21). And God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who obey Him! (Acts 5:32.)

God's special Sabbath covenant reveals another important reason why true Christians keep His Sabbath today. Let's further understand why God wanted to sanctify the Israelites.

4. What were the Israelites to become if they obeyed God? Exodus 19:5-6.Were they to set an example of obedience for the Gentile nations? Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

COMMENT: Israel was to be set apart as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They, by their example, were to lead the Gentiles to obedience to God so they could also receive the blessings that would result from keeping God's Law.

God called the ancient Israelites out of slavery not only to fulfill His promises to the patriarchs, but also so that through the Israelites He could reveal Himself to the world—to show that He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe—and to reveal His laws, commandments, promises and

blessings to the rest of mankind! So the keeping of God’s Sabbaths was to also be a sign that the Israelites were selected for this purpose.

5. Did the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac become a holy nation and kingdom of priests? Ezekiel 20:13.(Notice the word "rebelled.") Did they keep God’s Sabbaths? Same verse.

COMMENT: The nation or Congregation of Israel was a physical type of God’s spiritual Church today. Had the Israelites obeyed God, they would have become a holy nation, fit and able to teach other nations. But they failed to keep the Sabbath holy. Therefore they failed to remember the true Creator God and failed to become a holy people and a light to the world.

6. Today, for what special purpose are Spirit-begotten Christians— spiritual Israelites—especially set apart from this present evil world? 1 Peter 2:5,1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:6.Are they the light that ancient Israel failed to become? Matthew 5:14,Matthew 5:16.

COMMENT: As we learned in Lesson 16, the Old Covenant Israelites failed to respond to their calling because they did not have the Holy Spirit to help them recognize or understand this call and carry it out. But we, if we are converted spiritual Israelites, do have the perception and power through the Holy Spirit to recognize our calling and obey God.

It is we who keep God’s Sabbath day holy and keep His other commandments who will become God’s "holy nation" and "kingdom of priests"! We will become this holy nation when we are born into the Kingdom of God at Christ’s soon coming. Christ will then have made us "kings and priests" unto Himself and His Father (Revelation 1:6). As members of the ruling Family of God, we will be prepared to teach, serve and save the world throughout the Millennium and beyond!

True Church Kept God’s Sabbath

Jesus, our perfect example, kept the seventh-day Sabbath properly. So did the Church He founded. The example set by Christ and His apostles is recorded in the Bible for us to follow today.

1. Did Jesus set an example of how we are to live? 1 Peter 2:21;1 John 2:6.

COMMENT: Jesus taught His disciples how to live the Christian way of life. He also showed how He, as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), intended the Sabbath to be kept. And Jesus shows us today, by His recorded example and teaching, how the Sabbath is to be a great joy and blessing.

2. How do we know Christ kept the Sabbath? Luke 4:16,Luke 4:31.

COMMENT: Jesus regularly attended religious services on the Sabbath day "as his custom was." He obeyed His own command to meet every Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3). This is the day He would naturally have observed, because He is the One who made the Sabbath and ordained that it be kept holy!

3. Did the women who came with Jesus from Galilee observe the Sabbath a few days after He was crucified? Luke 23:55-56.Was the first day of the week (Sunday) still a regular work day? Luke 24:1.

COMMENT: Notice the words according to the commandment" in Luke 23:56.Writing this account perhaps 30 years later, Luke knew the Sabbath commandment was still in effect.

4. Was it also the Apostle Paul’s custom to keep the Sabbath? Acts 17:12.Did Paul keep the Sabbath because he felt like it, or because Jesus Christ dwelt in him through the Holy Spirit? Galatians 2:20.Does Christ’s will remain the same forever? Hebrews 13:8.

COMMENT: It is quite plain that the Apostle Paul observed the same day Christ did. And if Christ lives His life in us today through God’s Spirit, we will also be keeping the same day Jesus kept—the seventh-day Sabbath!

5. Was the Apostle Paul specially taught by Christ in preparation for his ministry? Galatians 1:11-12,Galatians 1:17-18.

COMMENT: Christ trained Paul for his ministry to the Gentiles, apparently during the three years he was in Arabia. Had Christ done away with any of His Father’s laws or changed the Sabbath to some other day, He certainly would have revealed it to Paul. But no changes were made. Paul taught the Church of God exactly what Christ taught him to preach, as the Bible clearly shows! Notice further.

6. Did Paul, even in a predominantly Gentile city, observe the seventh-day Sabbath? Acts 18:1-4,Acts 18:6, Acts 18:11.

COMMENT: For over 18 months in Corinth, Paul labored during the first six days of the week as a tentmaker. Then he preached every Sabbath—on Saturday, the seventh day! Notice how the Sabbath was regarded by Gentile converts in the early Church.

7. On one particular occasion Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-42). After the Jews left the synagogue, did the Gentiles ask Paul to preach to them again on the next Sabbath? Acts 13:42. On the next Sabbath, how many came to hear Paul? Acts 13:44.

COMMENT: Notice that it was the practice of many Gentiles to meet with the Jews on the Sabbath. And because these Gentiles were interested in Paul’s message, they asked him to speak about Jesus again on the very next Sabbath.

Even though this would have been a good opportunity to do so, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, did not tell them to cease assembling on the Sabbath for worship!

If we could find even one text in the New Testament giving us as strong authority for Sunday observance as these do for Sabbath keeping, we would have Scriptural authority for observing the first day of the week. But it just isn’t there! The phrase "first day of the week" is found eight times in the New Testament. But in not one of these eight texts is there found any authority for changing the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday, as our free booklet Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath? thoroughly explains. (A future lesson will cover the details of how men, not God, changed the Sabbath to Sunday, the first day of the week.)

8. Since Paul followed the example of Christ who dwelt in him, what did he command the Gentile Christians at Corinth? 1 Corinthians 11:1.Did he command the Philippians to do likewise? Php 3:17.

COMMENT: Paul taught the converted, Spirit-begotten Gentile Christians to imitate his obedience to God, even as he imitated Christ’s obedience. The Christian Gentiles of the early Church of God

always assembled on the Sabbath day, just as Christ did while in the flesh, in order to keep the day God commands in His Word. In like manner today, all Spirit-begotten children of God imitate Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul by keeping the seventh-day Sabbath holy!

9. What did Christ say that indicates His Church would still be keeping the Sabbath even at the time of the end, just before His Second Coming? Matthew 24:20.

COMMENT: Christ clearly shows here that His Church would continue to keep His Sabbath commandment. The early Church of God fled from Jerusalem before the city was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. True Christians were keeping the Sabbath at that time. But this prophecy is dual, and its main fulfillment is yet in the future. It shows that God's people will then still be keeping His Sabbath! For over 1,900 years, God's one and only Church has continued to keep the commandments of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath! (Revelation 12:17;Revelation 14:12.) Weekly Cycle Remains Unchanged Would God set apart a certain day of the week, put His blessing on it, make it holy time, command that it be kept holy forever, and then let that holy time become "lost" so we would not know when to keep it today? Absolutely not!

God has seen to it that the knowledge of when to keep His holy Sabbath day has been preserved.

1. What did God entrust the tribe of Judah—the Jews—to preserve? Romans 3:1-2.

COMMENT: Paul shows that God used the Jews to preserve the Hebrew or Old Testament Scriptures ("oracles"). God caused the Jews to preserve this revealed knowledge for His New Testament, Spirit-begotten Church!

2. What did Jesus say that shows the Old Testament Scriptures had been preserved? Matthew 5:17-18;Luke 16:17;John 5:46-47.

COMMENT: The Jews carefully preserved God's Word. Jesus plainly indicated it was intact in His day and dogmatically stated it would NEVER BE LOST! The Jews also preserved God's calendar, which includes the weekly cycle and the true Sabbath day, as well as the correct dates for the annual festivals.

3. Can we be absolutely certain that the Jews preserved and observed the right day for the Sabbath up to the time Jesus lived? Luke 4:16.

COMMENT: Notice again that it was Jesus' "custom" to keep the same Sabbath day the Jews observed. The One who made the Sabbath would not have been keeping the wrong day! Clearly the Jews at that time knew which day of the week was God's Sabbath.

Notice also that Jesus gave His official approval of the Scriptures the Jews used by reading aloud from them in the synagogues on the Sabbath day! But could time have been "lost" between then and now? After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Jews eventually migrated to all parts of the world. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews in China had no way of communicating with the Jews in Africa. Nor could the Jews in Europe communicate with other parts of the world.

If the weekly cycle had been changed or mixed up, the Jews in one part of the world would be observing one day for the Sabbath, while the Jews in another part would be observing another day. But everywhere, in every nation on earth, we find that the Jews have always been observing

the same day Jesus kept—the seventh day, Saturday! This practice of the Jews is proof that we have not lost the right day for God's Sabbath. Even though the Jews in general have lacked spiritual understanding and have disobeyed the Scriptures (John 7:19;Romans 3:3-4), and although they became overly strict in keeping the Sabbath by adding many of their own customs and traditions, the Jews have faithfully retained the knowledge of the correct day for God's Sabbath. (Request our free booklet Has Time Been Lost? for additional proof that the weekly cycle has not been broken.)

Lesson 24 Part 2

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 24 Part 2 The Truth About God’s Holy Sabbath Foreshadow of the Millennium

God has ordained a period of 7,000 years in which to accomplish His spiritual creation of mankind. The time pattern for God’s little-known plan is revealed in the first two chapters of Genesis. It is the seven-day week.

Besides being a memorial of creation and an identifier of the Creator and His Spirit-begotten children, the Bible shows that the weekly Sabbath is a type or foreshadow of the coming millennial "Sabbath"—the seventh millennial "day" in God’s 7,000-year "week" for the working out of His plan for mankind. Let’s understand.

1. Is a thousand years as a "day" to God, and vice versa? 2 Peter 3:8.Is the time Christ and the resurrected saints will rule over the earth specifically called a thousand years? Revelation 20:4-6.

COMMENT: In God’s plan for man, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years of human civilization is as one day in His planned "week" of seven 1,000-year "days"!

God intended the weekly Sabbath day to foreshadow or picture the coming 1,000-year period known as the Millennium. ("Millennium" literally means "thousand years.") The Millennium will be a time of rest and peace for the entire world—a 1,000-year "Sabbath" of rest from Satan’s influence and the resultant discontent, strife and warfare.

It is during this thousand-year Sabbath that the knowledge of God’s great purpose for mankind will spread throughout the world (Isaiah 11:9). All mankind then living will be taught God’s ways and given the opportunity to be begotten by God’s Spirit, and the vast majority will eventually be born into the Family of God. The first six days of creation week clearly correspond to the 6,000-year period of human civilization that we are now nearing the end of. Since Adam chose to follow Satan’s way of "get" instead of God’s way of "give," God has allotted mankind 6,O00 years in which to learn that disobedience to Him results in nothing but suffering and death!

God has permitted Satan to exercise dominion over mankind for 6,000 years. "Six thousand years," God said in effect to Satan, "you may labor and do all your work"—in this case Satan’s work of deception and influencing man to sin—"but the seventh thousand-year period is My Sabbath; in it you will not do any work" (compare with Exodus 20:9-10).

Thank God we are near the end of the six working "days" allotted to Satan. God’s thousand-year "Sabbath" is about to begin!

Sabbath Pictures the Kingdom of God In Hebrews 3:1-19 and Hebrews 4:1-16, Christians are exhorted to continue keeping the seventh-day Sabbath in light of an interesting and important analogy. A comparison is drawn between ancient Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land and the Christian’s entrance into the Kingdom of God. We need to understand and be sure we’re heeding

God’s warning!

1. What does God warn all His Spirit-begotten children about entering His "rest"? Hebrews 3:7-13,Hebrews 3:16-19;Hebrews 4:1-2.Was rebellion, especially Sabbath breaking. the reason God did not allow an entire generation of Israelites to enter His "rest"? Ezekiel 20:12-13,Ezekiel 20:15-16.

COMMENT: The word "rest" in the above mentioned verses in Hebrews is translated from the Greek word katapausin, which is defined as "rest" or "place of rest." As used in Hebrews 3:11 and Hebrews 3:18, it denotes the ancient Israelites’ rest from their wanderings in the wilderness by entering the Promised Land. The "rest" Israel finally entered (Joshua 1:13)is symbolic of the Christian’s spiritual "rest" (Hebrews 4:1)-- of entering (being born) into the divine Kingdom or Family of God and living forever! The Israelites were headed toward the Promised Land, even as God’s Spirit-begotten children today (spiritual Israelites) are aiming at the goal of entering God’s Kingdom. But because Israel had become rebellious and polluted God’s Sabbaths during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God did not allow the generation of adults that came out of Egypt to enter the Promised Land.

2. Was it primarily because of their unbelief that the Israelites disobeyed, and therefore were prevented from entering God’s "rest" for them—the land of Canaan? Hebrews 3:19;???Hebrews 4:1-2.

COMMENT: Because the Israelites did not believe God, they "hardened their hearts." They profaned God’s Sabbaths even though He had made Sabbath keeping the very test of their obedience (Exodus 16:4). Therefore God said of that generation, "They shall not enter into my rest" (Hebrews 3:11). And none of that generation, except faithful Joshua and Caleb, entered the Promised Land. But the next generation born during the 40 years in the wilderness, and those under 20 years of age at the Exodus, did enter with those two men. God had originally promised this land to Abraham and his descendants and, whether or not the Israelites obeyed, God was bound to keep His promise.

3. If New Testament Christians believe and obey God, may they enter their "rest"—eternal life in God’s Kingdom? Hebrews 4:3,first nine words. What does Hebrews 4:4 refer to? Genesis 2:1-3.

COMMENT: Hebrews 4:4 plainly speaks of God’s rest after finishing His work of creation. This verse refers directly to the first weekly Sabbath day as a type of the "rest" Hebrews 3:1-19 and Hebrews 4:1-16 in Hebrews are speaking of. And so the Sabbath day was symbolic of God’s "rest" for ancient Israel—the Promised Land they entered. And both are symbolic of true Christians entering the Kingdom of God at Christ’s return!

4. Will God’s Spirit-begotten children be keeping His Sabbath day as a weekly foreshadow of their future "rest" in His Kingdom? Hebrews 4:9-10.

COMMENT: The meaning of Hebrews 4:9 has been obscured by the word "rest" in the King James Version. Everywhere else in Hebrews 3:1-19 and Hebrews 4:1-16 the word "rest" is translated from the Greek word katapausin. However, in Hebrews 4:9, "rest" is translated from sabbatismos, which literally means "keeping of a Sabbath"!

Most English translations have correctly translated Hebrews 4:9.Even the margin of the King James Version renders it: "There remaineth therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God." The Moffatt translation renders this verse: "There is a Sabbath-Rest, then, reserved still for the People of God." The Lamsa translation really makes it clear: "It is therefore the duty of the people of (God to keep the Sabbath." So there still remains a sabbatismos—the KEEPING of the Sabbath day— for God's people today. And Spirit-begotten Christians (spiritual Israelites) will enter the future "rest" (katapausin) of God's Kingdom even as they now keep the weekly Sabbath, which points to it! But why would the Kingdom of God be pictured as a "rest"? Because being a divine member in God's Family will be a rest from sin. When born of God's Spirit, we will be free of our present struggles against sin. We will then possess the fullness of the mind and character of God and thus be able to remain sinless forever! (1 John 3:9.) And when born into God's Kingdom—when we become eternal members of God's divine Family—we will each possess the same kind of gloriously radiant and powerful spirit body that Christ and the Father now have. We will no longer be limited by our present weak, mortal bodies that tire so easily. We'll then possess the capacity for tireless, never-ending accomplishment (Isaiah 40:28,Isaiah 40:31). This is what we can look forward to when we enter God's "rest"—when born into the eternal Family of God!

Results of Polluting God's Sabbath The Sabbath is so important to God that He included Sabbath keeping as one of His Ten Commandments—as part of the first four, which explain what our relationship to God should be.

Let's understand just how important Sabbath keeping really is in God's sight.

1. After delivering His people Israel from slavery in Egypt, did God promise them tremendous blessings if they would keep His commandments? Read Leviticus 26:3-12.Which commandments did God specifically mention? Leviticus 26:1-2. How else would God bless Israel for obedience to Him? Read Deuteronomy 28:1-13.

2. But what terrible curses would result if the Israelites would not keep God's commandments? Read Leviticus 26:14-39.Was national defeat and captivity one of the curses? Leviticus 26:31-33, Leviticus 26:38-39. What else would God do to the Israelites if they would not obey Him? Read Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

COMMENT: God warned that tragic curses would befall the people if they would not keep His commandments, especially the Fourth, which was the great sign identifying Him as their God and them as His chosen people!

3. Did the house of Israel obey God? 2 Kings 17:16-17.What did God eventually do to the people because of their disobedience? 2 Kings 17:18. Were they removed to a foreign land? 2 Kings 17:23.

COMMENT: In the days of their last king, Hoshea, the northern ten tribes were invaded by Assyria, conquered, removed from their land and made slaves! The reason for that punishment was the same reason God punished Israel in the wilderness—for rebelling against Him, and specifically for polluting His Sabbaths! (Review Ezekiel 20:12-24.) They also committed idolatry, which would not have happened had they kept the Sabbath.

4. But the house of Judah also polluted God’s Sabbaths and therefore came under His curse. Over 100 years after the house of Israel went into captivity, what did God do to Judah for not keeping His holy Sabbaths? 2 Chronicles 36:5-7,2 Chronicles 36:16-19, 2 Chronicles 36:21. What happened to those who were not killed? 2 Chronicles 36:20.

COMMENT: The sacking and destruction of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, which began in 604 B.C., and the captivity of those who survived, was the fulfillment of God’s warning to Judah (Jeremiah 17:21-25,Jeremiah 17:27). God was patient with the houses of Israel and Judah, but after their persistent disobedience, He finally allowed them to be militarily defeated and taken into captivity!

5. Was Nehemiah well aware that the main reason Judah had been punished was for breaking God’s Sabbath, which the Jews were beginning to profane again in his day? Nehemiah 13:15,Nehemiah 13:17-18.

COMMENT: The punishments that befell ancient Israel and Judah were types of the same punishments prophesied to befall their modern descendants, who will be punished for the same sins—Sabbath breaking and idolatry. The curses God brought upon His chosen people are dual in fulfillment! The Sabbath-rejecting modern-day nations descended from ancient Israel, and this entire Sabbath-rejecting world, will also be punished for their disobedience!

Great Blessings for Obedience When God made the Sabbath by resting on the seventh day of creation week, He intended His holy Sabbath to be a blessing to all mankind. Not only would people be refreshed physically by keeping God’s commanded rest day, they would also be blessed materially and spiritually.

1. Does God promise to bless the individual who keeps His Sabbath? Isaiah 56:1-2.What did Jesus say a true Christian will inherit? Matthew 5:5.What does He, as Lord of the Sabbath, promise those who keep His Sabbath properly? Isaiah 58:13-14.

COMMENT: The "heritage of Jacob" is the inheritance God originally promised to Jacob’s grandfather, righteous Abraham. God promises us— if we have become Abraham’s obedient spiritual "seed" through Christ (Galatians 3:16,Galatians 3:29) -- eternal inheritance of the earth (Romans 4:13), as well as great spiritual blessings! Let’s notice further.

2. Recall the tremendous physical blessings God promised the ancient Israelites if they would keep His Sabbath and other commandments. Are the blessings of Leviticus 26:11-12 also promised to Spirit-begotten Christians? 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.Upon what conditions? 2 Corinthians 6:17.

COMMENT: These blessings are clearly conditional, both for the ancient Israelites and for spiritual Israelites—God’s Church today. God’s blessings come as a result of obedience to Him, not rebellion or apathy.

2 Corinthians 6:18 shows us one of the greatest of God’s blessings: becoming Spirit-born members in the divine Family of God! Those who obediently keep God’s Sabbath spiritually draw closer to their Creator. They are reminded of and grow in the understanding of God’s great purpose for them. They are cooperating with God in perfecting the spiritual character He is creating within them in preparation for their eventual birth into His Family.

3. In the very next verse, what is the Apostle Paul’s exhortation to all Christians, which they must follow before they can receive God’s spiritual blessings? 2 Corinthians 7:1.

COMMENT: It is not possible to perfect holiness by profaning God’s holy Sabbath day!

4. What name does God promise to give those who obey Him, faithfully observing His Sabbath every week? Isaiah 56:4-6.Will God make them His joyful Sons with positions of rulership in His own house, His Temple—the headquarters of His world government? Isaiah 56:5 and the first part of Isaiah 56:7; also Revelation 3:12.

COMMENT: God specifically promises that if we do not pollute His Sabbath, but keep it as He commands, we will inherit an everlasting name— the family name GOD! Our incredible potential, as we learned in God’s Word through previous lessons, is to become sinless, powerful, Spirit-born members in God’s divine Family! Our spiritual birth into God’s Family will make us GOD BEINGS just like the Father "and Jesus Christ!

Tremendous spiritual blessings await those who have the sign of obedience to God that distinguishes them—sets them apart—as ones destined to inherit God’s incomprehensible riches—glorious eternal life filled with never-ending joy and accomplishment in the universe-ruling Kingdom of God! The Faith to Obey

Keeping the Sabbath sometimes requires considerable faith. It is not always easy to obey God in a world that lives diametrically opposite to God’s way. But as we have just seen, the blessings are very great for those who have the courage to step out in faith and obey God, regardless of any pressures or seemingly insurmountable obstacles that appear to be preventing them from keeping the seventh-day Sabbath.

Let’s review a few facts about the help God promises to give us if we sincerely desire to obey Him in all things.

1. Does God plainly show that we must have faith before He will give us eternal "rest"—membership in His Kingdom? Hebrews 4:1-3,Hebrews 4:6. (Notice the words "faith" in Hebrews 4:2, "believed" in Hebrews 4:3 and "unbelief" in Hebrews 4:6.)

COMMENT: "Unbelief" is a lack of faith, resulting in disobedience to God. We are exercising faith when we obey God by resting on His Sabbath day. Notice further.

2. Must obedience accompany one’s faith to make it acceptable to God? Romans 3:31.Also read James 2:14-26.How does one demonstrate his faith? James 2:18.What does one’s faith become if not accompanied by works? James 2:17, James 2:20, James 2:26.

3. What further encouragement are Christians given about entering God’s eternal "rest"? Hebrews 4:10-11.Where may they go for the help—the faith— needed to obey God? Hebrews 4:14-16.

COMMENT: This whole chapter is about keeping God’s Sabbath. And it closes by telling us to go to Christ for the help we need in overcoming all obstacles in our path that may be hindering us from obeying God.

4. Is the faith through which we are to please God and receive salvation a gift from God? Ephesians 2:8.Is this faith an attribute of the Holy Spirit that all true Christians must possess?

Galatians 5:22.Whose faith, in reality, is it? Revelation 14:12.

COMMENT: In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the true Church of God. Those in God’s Church have the "faith of Jesus." It is not just their faith in HIM, but His faith placed in them and acting in them!

God’s Spirit can impart to your mind real saving faith. That faith—the very faith of Jesus Christ by which He Himself obeyed God—will enable you to obey God! (Be sure to review in Lesson 12 the section "You Can Overcome!" It explains in much greater detail the faith necessary to obey God, and how we can receive it.) Rejoice in God’s Sabbath Day!

1. Is the keeping of God’s Sabbath commandment a grievous burden to Christians? 1 John 5:3.

COMMENT: God’s Ten Commandments, including the Fourth, are a blessing to keep, not a burden! Through a complete misunderstanding of the Scriptures, some people have tried to make the Sabbath command appear as a "yoke of bondage." They talk as if the Sabbath is a great curse to mankind! Let’s completely dispel this myth.

2. Was man made for the Sabbath, or was the Sabbath made for man? Mark 2:27.

COMMENT: The Sabbath, as we have learned, is holy time. Yet, it was made for man—to be a great BLESSING to all mankind. The Sabbath is one of the greatest blessings the Creator has bestowed upon the human family! The true observance of the Sabbath would keep man in contact with God. Without that contact, he cannot know the tremendous purpose for his existence or understand the laws that govern success in life. He is cut off from the understanding of what he is, where he is going and how to get there.

However, as a result of God having caused the house of Judah to be taken into Babylonian captivity for polluting His Sabbaths, many of the Jews who were allowed to return to Jerusalem 70 years later became very strict in observing it. Therefore the Pharisees of Jesus’ day had a list of about 65 activities defined as "work" that they prohibited. These uninspired prohibitions made Sabbath observance a "yoke of bondage."

These additions went far beyond the spirit and intent of the Fourth Commandment. Jesus Christ rebuked the self-righteous Pharisees for their traditions and swept those human regulations aside!

3. Did Jesus show it is permissible to obtain food on the Sabbath if one is hungry? Matthew 12:1-8;Mark 2:27.How did He show it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath? Mark 3:1-5.

4. Did the Lord of the Sabbath acknowledge that it was proper to rescue an animal that had fallen into a ditch on the Sabbath, and thus by implication handle other genuine emergencies that cannot wait until after the Sabbath to be resolved? Luke 14:5;Matthew 12:9-13.Could one water an animal, and by implication feed it, on God’s day of rest? Luke 13:10-17,especially Luke 13:15.

COMMENT: God wants us to use honest, sound judgment in applying the spirit and intent of what we can or should not do on His Sabbath day. Christ taught balance and wisdom and having the right attitude in observing the Sabbath. The Jews, steeped in physical rituals, could not understand the spiritual application of the Sabbath commandment. They would rescue an animal from a ditch on the Sabbath, but condemned Christ for healing an unfortunate human being on that day! By

adding their own traditions and interpretations, they had made the Sabbath a burden to keep.

5. Should we pursue our own interests and pleasures on the Sabbath? Isaiah 58:13.

COMMENT: The Sabbath belongs to God. He made this 24-hour period holy time! Employment, shopping, mowing the lawn and home maintenance are to be done on the previous six days of the week. Neither is the Sabbath the appropriate time for indulging in hobbies, sports and other special interests. Such activities take our minds away from God and the entire purpose for His Sabbath.

6. In His instruction to ancient Israel, what principle does God reveal for Christians today in regard to preparing for the Sabbath? Exodus 16:22-23.

COMMENT: The Sabbath is intended to free us from as many physical labors and job-related mental activities as possible. God told the Israelites to prepare ahead by doing any heavy cooking or baking the day before the Sabbath. Christians today should plan to have their work completed before sunset on the evening of the sixth day (Friday). The house should be cleaned, the dishes washed, and any heavy cooking or baking done before sunset so that the entire family can begin the Sabbath in an atmosphere of rest and worship—that it may be a day truly kept HOLY to God!

7. Are we to delight in God’s holy Sabbath day? Isaiah 58:13.How do we do this? Same verse.

COMMENT: The Sabbath will be a day of gladness and joy—a delight to those who honor and worship God. Resting from our work and mundane pleasures on God’s day gives us an opportunity to spend much more time in prayer to God, and in studying, discussing and meditating upon His Word— filling our minds with the thoughts and character of our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Sabbath is also a time for real family togetherness that may not otherwise be possible—a special time and opportunity to teach our children about God and His ways. It is also time when we can, with some leisure, observe and appreciate the beauties and marvels of God’s creation—whether flowers, bees or any other part of His creation conveniently accessible.

Keeping the Sabbath as God instructs will give us the spiritual lift and inspiration we need to help us work the next six days with joy and purpose. It will help us realize that our everyday experience of putting God’s Word into practice in our lives is helping to build His character in us!

Thus the Sabbath will become a great delight to us as we learn the way of God on His weekly Holy Day. We will be "schooling" ourselves—preparing ourselves for the great work we are to perform in the Millennium and beyond after being born into the ruling Family of God.

If you are one of God’s Spirit-begotten children and keep His Sabbath as He commands, then you will have God’s sign in the true and saving sense. You will be preparing to enter the Kingdom of God as a priest (teacher) and ruler (Revelation 5:10)capable of tremendous service in tomorrow’s world!

Fellowship on the Sabbath The Sabbath is a day of physical rest and spiritual refreshing. It is also a day for holy convocation and fellowship with other Christians, with God the Father and with Jesus Christ. It is very important that we understand the truth about Christian fellowship.

1. Did God command the Israelites to meet together for worship on the weekly Sabbath? Leviticus 23:3.Did Jesus obey this, His own command? Luke 4:16.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, who set the example of how we should live, taught by His own life and practice that a holy convocation—a commanded assembly—of God’s people is to be held on every Sabbath. It is a day for the united worship of God by His called and chosen people. It is a time for God’s ministers to preach and expound the principles of God’s living laws from His inspired Word (Ephesians 4:11-13).

2. What are New Testament Christians admonished regarding the assembling of themselves? Hebrews 10:24-25.Just how important is Christian fellowship within the body of believers that comprises the Church of God? 1 John 1:3,1 John 1:6-7.

COMMENT: Christ’s presence is in His Sabbath day, making it holy. When the Father’s own obedient children, each joined to Christ (John 15:1-5)-- each walking with Christ in harmony—assemble on His Holy Day, they actually have fellowship with Christ. He is there, in their midst, in spirit! And Christ joins them together through God’s Spirit in fellowship with Him and the Father!

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Those who assemble to worship the Father and Christ in any way contrary to the way or the time God’s Word commands are NOT worshipping them in spirit and in truth. God simply will not accept such worship because it is in vain! (Mark 7:7-9.)

Often, when people learn the truth about the Sabbath, they seek some religious group to assemble with. But it is not enough to meet with just any group because it may accept the Sabbath. This does not necessarily mean it is the Church of God. As we learned in our studies with Lesson 19, Jesus said He would build His Church (Matthew 16:18). He built only ONE Church! (Ephesians 4:4.)

There is only one body of true believers—Spirit-begotten Christians— empowered by God and carrying out God’s great commission to preach the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness (Matthew 24:14). It is faithfully keeping all the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17)with the help of His Holy Spirit. It is, as Jesus said it would be, a "little flock," persecuted, despised by the world. We think you already know and understand which church God is in and working through today.

Today’s people of God attend weekly Sabbath services of the Worldwide Church of God in more than 50 nations around the world! Every Sabbath, they meet together to receive spiritual instruction from the Bible as taught by the ministry of God’s Church.

God’s people truly rejoice in His Sabbath and enjoy fellowshipping with each other on His weekly Holy Day. They are learning what a pleasure and great blessing it is to keep God’s Sabbath holy—the day that reminds us of the Creator God and His stupendous purpose for mankind!

Properly understood and properly observed, God’s holy Sabbath day is one of God’s greatest blessings given to mankind. It is an identifying SIGN between true Christians and their Creator. "Remember" it—"keep it holy."

If, after completing this study and reading our free booklet on the Christian Sabbath, you have further questions about the Sabbath or about how it should be kept today, please feel free to discuss your questions with one of God’s ministers. You may write or call our local office nearest you to learn how to contact a minister of the Worldwide Church of God in your area.

[Editor’s note: The WCG is now antithetical to the Sabbath and Sabbathkeepers. The present leader of the church, Joseph Tkach, Jr. was quoted as saying that "a person who keeps the Sabbath minimizes Christ’s sacrifice", which is a veiled damnation of Sabbathkeepers. It is strongly suggested that a person wishing to fellowship with other likeminded Sabbathkeepers to seek out the various Churches of God who still support the Sabbath. To confuse the issue, many WCG congregations continue to meet on the Sabbath, but no longer "observe" or "keep" the Sabbath as outlined in this Course.]

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect—unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. After renewing the face of the earth and creating all life upon it in six days, the Word (Christ) A. made the first Sabbath by resting on the seventh day. B. sanctified the seventh day of creation week, setting it and every future Sabbath apart for a holy use. C. set the seventh day apart for man’s physical and spiritual rejuvenation. D. All of the above.

2. For whom was the Sabbath made? A. For all mankind, regardless of race or nationality. B. Just for the ancient Israelites, particularly the Jews. C. For New Testament Christians only. D. For those who need time to catch up on work around the house.

3. Which statement is FALSE? A. The word "sabbath" means rest in the Hebrew language. B. The seventh-day Sabbath is the true "Lord’s day" because Christ made it. C. Sunday, the first day of the week, is the "Lord’s day." D. God’s holy Sabbath day is the time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

4. Keeping God’s Sabbath holy A. reminds us of the Creator and Ruler of all things. B. allows us more time to think and study about God and His awesome purpose for mankind. C. enables us to worship God in private and in fellowship with others. D. All of the above.

5. Righteous men such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob A. knew nothing about God’s Sabbath. B. observed Sunday faithfully. C. kept God’s commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath. D. kept God’s Law, but not His Sabbath.

6. Shortly after delivering the Israelites from Egypt and before they arrived at Mt. Sinai, God A. changed the Sabbath to Sunday. B. made it absolutely clear to them which day is His Sabbath by miraculously providing manna every day except the Sabbath. C. did not test their obedience to His

Sabbath commandment. D. told them that He did not care if they kept His Sabbath.

7. In the special Sabbath covenant God made with ancient Israel, He said that Sabbath keeping would A. be a sign identifying Him as the Creator God. B. be a sign only to the Jews showing that they were His people. C. be necessary only until Christ's First Coming. D. not be required forever.

8. Keeping the Fourth Commandment is a crucial test of our obedience to God because A. most people want to be different from the world. B. most people want to obey all of God's commandments. C. it identifies those who have truly surrendered to God—who strive to obey all of His commandments. D.it is the only commandment we must keep.

9. God's people today are spiritual Israelites (Galatians 3:28-29), and therefore A. keep God's Law in the spirit, not in the letter. B. are not required to keep the Sabbath as did Abraham and Jesus Christ. C. do not need to keep any of God's laws. D. keep the Sabbath as a sign they are His people.

10. Which statement is FALSE? A. If the Israelites had obeyed God, they would have become a nation of kings and priests. B. Keeping God's Sabbath has no connection with a Christian's responsibilities in God's Kingdom. C. Keeping the Sabbath is part of God's teacher-training program. D. Obedient Christians will become a spiritual nation of rulers and teachers when born into God's Family.

11. Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath A. in obedience to His own command, setting an example for us to follow. B. because that was the day His friends and neighbors kept. C. because it was Jewish. D. only to follow family tradition.

12. The many references to the Sabbath in the New Testament show that the A. apostles were observing Sunday. B. Gentile Christians never did keep the Sabbath. C. apostles did not teach Sabbath keeping. D. true Church kept the seventh-day Sabbath decades after Christ's crucifixion.

13. The Apostle Paul taught the Gentiles A. not to follow his example of Sabbath keeping. B. that the Sabbath was for Jewish Christians only. C. to imitate His example of obedience to God. D. to keep Sunday.

14. Which statement is FALSE? A. God made sure that the knowledge of when to keep His holy Sabbath has been preserved. B. God used the Jews to preserve the Old Testament Scriptures and His calendar. C. The Jews have faithfully retained the knowledge of the correct day for God's Sabbath. D. Time was "lost" between A.D. 70 and now, breaking the weekly cycle.

15. The seventh-day Sabbath A. does not picture the coming millennial "Sabbath." B. pictures the coming 1,000-year period known as the Millennium. C. pictures the rest and peace of Christians in heaven. D. will be observed only during the Millennium.

16. God did not allow an entire generation of Israelites to enter His "rest"—the Promised Land—because they A. obeyed but did not believe Him. B. believed but did not obey Him. C. rebelled and broke the Sabbath. D. obeyed all His commandments except the Fourth.

17. What must Spirit-begotten children of God do today to be born into His Family? A. Accept Jesus as their Savior and observe Sunday faithfully. B. Keep all His commandments, including the

Sabbath, with the help of His Spirit. C. Only keep the seventh-day Sabbath faithfully. D. Just fellowship with true believers on the Sabbath.

18. Which statement does Not show why the Kingdom of God is pictured as a "rest"? A. Being a divine member in God's Family will be a rest from sin. B. When born of God's Spirit, we will be free of our struggles against sin. C. As members of God's Family, we will have nothing to do for eternity. D.Members of God's Family possess the capacity for tireless, never-ending accomplishment.

19. What blessings has God promised to those who keep all His commandments? A. The "heritage of Jacob"—eternal inheritance of the earth. B. Becoming Spirit-born members in God's divine Family. C. An everlasting name—the family name "God." D. All of the above.

20. Which statement is FALSE? A. It is usually convenient and easy to keep God's Sabbath in today's world. B. Keeping God's Sabbath sometimes requires considerable faith. C. The blessings are great for those who have the courage to obey God in faith. D. We must ask Christ for the faith we lack.

21. The faith we need to keep God's commandments, including the Fourth, A. comes from within ourselves. B. is the very faith of Jesus Christ. C. is not a gift from God. D. is not an attribute of the Holy Spirit.

22. Keeping God's Sabbath as He commands A. is a great blessing to those who obey Him. B. is a "yoke of bondage" to be endured. C. requires avoiding the activities defined as "work" by the Pharisees of Jesus' day. D. is impossible today.

23. How can we keep the Sabbath holy? A. By pursuing our own interests and pleasures on this day. B. By not preparing for it in advance. C. By using honest, sound judgment in applying the spirit and intent of the Fourth Commandment. D. Simply by thinking spiritual thoughts while continuing our regular activities.

24. Why is it so important for Christians to assemble on the Sabbath? A. To hear God's ministers expound the principles of Christian living from the Bible. B. To worship God in spirit and truth. C. To have united fellowship with Christ and the Father through God's Spirit. D. All of the above.

25. Based on what we've learned from the Bible, how can we identify the one and only Church Jesus built? A. It is faithfully observing Sunday. B. Merely by the fact it emphasizes observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. C. By the fact it is faithfully keeping all of God's commandments, including the Fourth, and is proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. D. It cannot be clearly identified today.

Lesson 25

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 25

1986

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PASSOVER _____ The Beginning of God’s Master Plan

Paul said Christ is "our Passover" sacrifice. What did he mean? Most people assume that Christ’s death FINISHED the plan of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let’s understand why. As Jesus Christ was expiring His last breath on the cross, He exclaimed: "It is finished" (John 19:30). Traditional Christianity therefore has assumed that the death of Christ finished God’s plan of salvation. But what was finished?

It was the work the Father commissioned Jesus to do (John 17:4). That work included the sacrifice of His life as "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7)to pay the penalty of our sins. But the death of Jesus did not finish the plan of salvation! Not at all. It was only the beginning--the first step in God’s Master Plan.

Passover Pictured Christ’s Sacrifice The first Passover was observed by the ancient Israelites just before their exodus from Egypt. They had been slaves in Egypt for nearly a century before God freed them through a series of plagues He caused to punish their Egyptian captors for refusing to let them go. The 10th and last plague was death for every firstborn in Egypt. But none of the Israelites were harmed.

God, through Moses, had instructed every Israelite family in Egypt to sacrifice a lamb and smear some of its blood on the doorposts of their houses. On the night this was done, the death angel passed over every house marked with lamb’s blood.

God protected the ancient Israelites from physical death through a symbol--the blood of these lambs. This was symbolic of the blood of Christ, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29), which would be shed much later to make possible the spiritual salvation of mankind. With the institution of the Passover, God began to reveal to His newly forming nation and congregation ("church"--Acts 7:38)seven annual festivals, and commanded that they be observed forever.

Why These Festivals?

God’s annual festivals and Holy Days have tremendous spiritual meaning. They not only bring His people together in holy convocations (commanded religious assemblies), but more importantly, they reveal His great Master Plan by which He is fulfilling His awesome purpose for humanity! The annual observances God instituted reveal a step-by-step outline of how He is accomplishing His supreme purpose. Each portrays a great event in God’s plan for the salvation of all mankind. But

the vast majority are deceived by Satan, the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4;Revelation 12:9). They don't understand the true way to salvation. That's because they do not know what sin is, nor what its penalty is. Consequently they don't really know why man needs a Savior! The meaning of repentance is not understood, or what God's way of life is all about. They don't understand what God's Spirit is, why we need it, or how to receive it. The religions of this world do not understand the processes of spiritual begettal, growth and birth into God's divine Family. They do not know that God is now calling only a few into His Church, or that those few are now being trained to rule in Christ's soon-coming world-ruling government. Nor do they realize that the vast "unsaved" majority will be given their opportunity for salvation in a later, more favorable age, when Christ and His Spirit-born assistants are ruling the earth.

All this truth is pictured by God's annual festivals and Holy Days! Those who faithfully observe these commanded days are reminded of these spiritual truths every year.

Just as the weekly Sabbath, if kept the way God intended, keeps man in a right relationship with his Creator and in the understanding of His great purpose for mankind, so the annual festivals and Sabbaths keep the Church in a right knowledge of His plan. Any group that refuses to keep holy the days God made holy is not in a right relationship with God, and simply does not understand the true way to salvation!

God's days are for God's people--His Church. It will be through His Church, during Christ's coming reign on earth, that the rest of the world will learn of these days and their vitally important meaning for mankind.

New Testament Memorial of Christ's Death

God commanded the ancient Israelites to observe the Passover as a yearly reminder of His delivering their firstborn from death in Egypt. Christians today are also commanded by God to observe the Passover, with its New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine, as a yearly reminder of His delivering them from the penalty of eternal death through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7), who became the New Testament Passover "Lamb" (John 1:29). The Bible clearly shows that the death of Christ is the first event, the first step, in God's great plan for eventually bringing thousands of millions into His divine Family. The Passover, the first of God's annual festivals, pictures that event. Jesus commanded that it be observed every year, with new symbols, so we would always remember His great sacrifice for us. The Church Jesus built and promised to preserve understands that the New Testament Passover is the annual memorial of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ--that it pictures our being reconciled to God through a Savior who rescued us from the penalty of our past sins. But this deceived world does not understand the real meaning of Christ's sacrifice. Instead of keeping the Passover, traditional Christianity observes Easter, supposedly in honor of Christ's resurrection. Yet the Bible nowhere commands us to celebrate His resurrection. And the world even has the resurrection on the wrong day! (The origin of Easter, and what the Bible says about this and other religious holidays, will be covered in a future lesson.)

God's Church has the precious knowledge of His truth, and His Spirit-begotten children faithfully observe all of His annual festivals!

You are about to begin a fascinating series of lessons that will thoroughly explain the meaning of God’s seven annual festivals and Holy Days. Let’s begin studying the details of the first step in God’s marvelous Master Plan--the Passover.

LESSON 25 Passover Lamb Prophetic of Christ’s Sacrifice

God’s annual festivals are full of meaning. They were given to teach us the knowledge of the seven steps in God’s plan for our spiritual salvation and Sonship in His Family.

God first began to reveal His festivals and Holy Days to the ancient Israelites while they were slaves in Egypt. It was then that God commanded His people to observe the Passover. Today, we can understand that this festival pictures the first step in God’s Master Plan. The Old Testament Passover was a commemoration of the first Passover God instituted for the deliverance of the Israelites’ firstborn from the plague of death. God had been pouring out His plagues on Egypt to influence the Pharaoh to free the Israelites so they could worship Him in the wilderness (Exodus chapters 5 through 11).

We find the historical record of the first Passover in Exodus 12:1-51.

1. Before God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, did He reveal when the new year should begin? Exodus 12:1-2.What is the name of the first month of the year as God counts time? Exodus 13:4.

COMMENT: The Israelites had been in Egyptian bondage for nearly a century. They were forced to work seven days a week and adapt to the Egyptian calendar and Egyptian holidays.

It was now God’s time to reverse this situation and claim these descendants of righteous Abraham as His own chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:8). They needed a complete reorganization of their social, religious and work customs.

God began by correcting the way they were keeping time. He commanded that the month Abib (which came to be called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity--Esther 3:7)be their first month. "Abib" is derived from the Hebrew word aviv, meaning "ears" or "green ears of grain." It is the month in which green ears of grain ripen--barley first, then winter wheat, which is usually still in green ears when the barley ripens. Thus God’s calendar begins in the spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

It should be noted, however, that the civil New Year celebrated by the Jews today is in the autumn. Although the Jews use Abib as the first month for religious reckoning, they use Tishri, the seventh month of God’s calendar, as the beginning of the civil and governmental year. As we learned in Lesson 23, God has used the Jews to preserve the Hebrew scriptures and calendar by which His Church, using the instructions preserved in the Bible, can accurately calculate when God’s festivals are to be observed.

2. What was each Israelite family to do on the 10th day of Abib? Exodus 12:3.Were they to select lambs without any deformities, diseases or imperfections? Exodus 12:5.

What is Jesus Christ called in John 1:29?Were the Israelites’ lambs therefore prophetic of Christ, our Savior "Lamb," who was sinless--without spiritual blemish or spot? 1 Peter 1:19.

3. On what day of the first month were the Israelites to slay the lambs they had selected? Exodus 12:6.

COMMENT: The Hebrew from which "in the evening" is translated literally means "between the two evenings" (see margin of most King James Versions). The Jewish Publication Society translated this phrase "at dusk" (1955 edition of The Holy Scriptures) and "at twilight" (1962 edtion). To judge from this translation, the first evening is when the sun goes over the horizon and the new day begins; the second evening when it has become dark and the stars are visible.

Some Jewish commentators redefine this phrase. But the teaching of the Church of God is that the lambs were killed just after sunset, in the very beginning of the 14th of Abib.

4. As soon as the lambs were killed, what was to be done with some of their blood? Exodus 12:7, Exodus 12:22. Were the Israelites then to roast and eat the lambs with unleavened bread and bitter herbs? Exodus 12:8.

5. What happened to the Egyptian firstborn on this night of the first Passover? Exodus 12:12, Exodus 12:29. Had God promised not to kill--to "pass over"--the Israelites' firstborn? Exodus 12:13. Was it the lambs' blood they had struck on the side and upper doorposts of their houses that saved the firstborn from death? Same verse.

COMMENT: The Israelites' firstborn clearly were protected from the plague of death by the blood of the lambs that had been applied to the doorposts of their houses. It was a "token" or sign showing that the household was to be spared.

Today, we can be protected from the penalty of eternal death our sins have earned through the blood of Christ, "our Passover" Lamb, who was "sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

God had Israel act out, in a physical way, a type or foreshadow of Christ, "the Lamb of God"--"Christ our Passover"--who would come nearly 1,500 years later to shed His blood, giving His perfect, sinless life as a sacrifice to pay the penalty of our transgressions of God's law.

6. For how long did God command Israel to keep the Passover? Exodus 12:14,Exodus 12:24.

COMMENT: Before making His covenant with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, God commanded them to keep the Passover forever--not just until Christ's death, which ended that covenant. When God declares a law to be everlasting, He means it! No authorization from God was ever given to cease observing this tremendously important festival! From its first institution in Egypt, the Passover became a yearly memorial of the Eternal's passing over Israel and sparing their firstborn from death. But the Passover also looked forward to the time when the Savior of all humanity would come to shed His blood, paying the penalty of human sin in full by His sacrifice, thus making possible the remission of our sins upon repentance and baptism.

Jesus Kept the Passover 1. When Jesus was young, did He go to Jerusalem with His parents, who kept the Passover every year? Luke 2:40-42.

2. When Jesus began His ministry, did He continue to observe the Passover? John 2:13,John 2:23.

COMMENT: Before and during His ministry, Jesus kept all of God's annual festivals, including the Passover. He, as the LORD of the Old Testament, is the One who revealed these festivals to ancient Israel and kept them Himself during His life on earth as a human being!

Before His crucifixion, Christ instructed His disciples how the New Testament Passover should be observed by true Christians in remembrance of His suffering and death, as we'll see a little later in this lesson.

3. Did Jesus observe with His 12 disciples on the night before He was crucified? Matthew 26:17-21;Luke 22:13-15.

COMMENT: Just before instituting the New Testament Passover symbols on the evening of the 14th of Abib, Jesus and His disciples ate roast lamb, as He ordained for the original Old Testament observance of this festival.

It should be noted, however, that they were not eating a sin offering. The Passover lamb is nowhere called a sin offering in the Bible. The Bible plainly shows that sin offerings were not instituted until after the Israelites had come out of Egypt--until after the Ten Commandments were given at Mt. Sinai and broken. The Passover was instituted in Egypt weeks before the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai and was repeated in the covenant made at Sinai, but it was not instituted by that covenant! The sacrifices instituted after the covenant was made and ratified at Sinai ceased to be necessary at Christ's death. Therefore they were not perpetuated by symbols in the New Testament Church. Only the Passover is continued; and it only with the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine. This was thoroughly explained in Lesson 17.

4. Were the Jews of Judea in Jesus' day observing the Passover one day later than He and His disciples? John 18:28;John 19:14.

Comment: The Apostle John shows that the Pharisees and the Sadducess held the Passover at a later time than did Christ. The Jews in Judea did not observe the biblical Passover at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan (Abib). They killed their lambs toward the end (in afternoon) of the 14th and ate them on the night of the 15th, the first Holy or High Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread! To this day, the Jews do not distinguish between the night of the Passover (Exodus 12:22 and the night after the Passover, when the Israelites left Egypt (Numbers 33:3;Exodus 12:42). Therefore the Jews today do not keep the real Passover at the time or in the manner Jesus instructed His disciples. They eat their ceremonial Passover meal, consisting of roast lamb and bitter herbs, on the evening of the 15th.

---------- | CHRIST OUR PASSOVER | | (1 Corinthians 5:7) | | Chronology of events on the day of Christ' crucifixion, A.D. 31 | |----------| | 14th of Abib | |----------| | | Evening | Night | Morning | Afternoon | | (after Sunset) | (before) | (after) | (about 3 PM) | |----------| |Christ institutes |Christ teaches |Christ is formal-|Christ is speared | |ordinance of foot |His disciples, |ly tried and con-|in the side by a | |washing and new |is betrayed and |demned, appears |Roman soldier and | |symbols of |arrested, ques- |before Pilate, |killed; His body | |unleavened bread |tioned by Annas |Herod, Pilate |carried to the | |and wine during |and informally |again, scourged |tomb just before | |His last supper. |tried

by the |and nailed to the|sunset. | | |Sanhedrin. |cross. | | | | | | |Matthew 26:20,26-29 |Matthew 26:30-75 |Matthew 27:1-45 |Matthew 27:46-60 | |Mark 14:17,22-25 |Mark 14:26-72 |Mark 15:1-33 |Mark 15:34-46 | |Luke 22:14-20 |Luke 22:24-65 |Luke 22:66-23: |Luke 23:46-54 | |John 13:1-17 |John 13:31-18: |John 18:28-19: |John 19:28-42 | ---------- A.D. 31 1ST MONTH A.D. 31

ABIB-NISAN SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SABBATH 1-NEW MOON 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15-1ST-DUB 16 17 18 19 20 21-LAST-DUB 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 DUB = Day of Unleavened Bread ---------- Christ Institutes Ordinance of Humility On the evening before Jesus Christ's crucifixion, while He and His disciples were partaking of the Old Testament Passover lamb for the last time, Jesus gave some specific commands for His New Testament Church. The Apostle John recorded the first vital part of Jesus' institution of the New Testament Passover.

1. Did Jesus wash His disciples' feet as part of the new way of observing the Passover? John 13:1-5.

COMMENT: In John 13:2, the words "and supper being ended" should properly be rendered "and during supper," as it is in a number of modern translations. The washing of feet was not part of the Old Testament Passover. This was being instituted for the first time by Christ Himself!

2. Did Peter, at first, refuse to allow Jesus to wash his feet? John 13:6-8. Could Peter have any relationship with Jesus unless he allowed him to wash his feet? John 13:8.

COMMENT: Since open-toed sandals were the customary footwear of the day, feet could become quite dirty. Foot washing, upon entering a house, was considered a menial task, usually done by the lowest servants.

Peter, not yet understanding the purpose of the ceremony Jesus was then instituting, protested. But Jesus explained that unless Peter took part in the foot-washing ceremony, he could have no relationship with Him--he could not be a Christian! Neither can we.

3. Why did Jesus institute this new observance of foot washing in connection with the New Testament Passover? John 13:12-16.

COMMENT: By washing their feet, Jesus was illustrating to His disciples that He had come to earth to serve mankind. Shortly afterward, He proved the extent of His willing and loving service when He gave His very life for the sins of all mankind! (John 15:13). He suffered the most humiliating and excruciatingly painful death imaginable in order to save us all from the penalty of eternal death!

Jesus explained that if He, being the Master, would serve mankind, then His disciples ought to also serve one another and the world. Jesus instituted foot washing in connection with the New Testament Passover as a symbol of service. It is a physical reminder of the principle He had taught them before: that they ought to be "as the Son of Man [who] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28,RAV). A willingness to serve and help others is an essential part of every Christian's training to be a loving ruler in God's Kingdom, where every ruler will administer God's government for the benefit of others rather than himself (Luke 22:25-27).

Notice what the Apostle Paul, who practiced what he preached, tells us about having a servant's attitude: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.... Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.... He humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!" (Php 2:3,Php 2:5-8, NIV). The New Testament shows that Christ's apostles did serve, just as He did, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. History records that most of them also gave their lives in that service.

4. Did Jesus plainly command His disciples to wash one another's feet? John 13:14-15.Were they to teach the world to do likewise? Matthew 28:19-20.

COMMENT: Some today, who are not yielded to God's will and are unwilling to be servants, do not want to humble themselves by washing someone else's feet. But Christ made it absolutely clear that all Christians should follow His example of service to others! If Jesus is our Lord and Master, we also "ought to wash one another's feet" at the Passover service once each year.

5. What special blessing is promised to those who obey Christ's words by participating in this meaningful ceremony at the Passover service? John 13:17;John 14:23. The New Symbols Now let's notice what else Jesus commanded His disciples to do after He finished washing their feet.

1. What completely new way of observing the Passover did Jesus institute shortly before His crucifixion? Luke 22:19-20;Matthew 26:26-29.

2. Was unleavened bread to symbolically represent Christ's body, which was to be brutally beaten and cut open for mankind? Luke 22:19;Matthew 26:26.

COMMENT: We know that Jesus was using unleavened bread because the Old Testament Passover was always eaten with unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8).

3. Was wine to symbolically represent His blood, which was to be shed for the forgiveness of past sins? Luke 22:20;Matthew 26:27-29;Romans 3:25.(More about the meaning of breaking and eating the unleavened bread and drinking the wine shortly.)

COMMENT: The "fruit of the vine" Jesus gave His disciples was fermented wine, not grape juice. Grape juice could be made only in the autumn, and could not be preserved until spring. It was either fermented into wine, or else made into a heavy syrup that was used as a sweetener. This definitely was not grape juice or syrup! In Jesus' day, the Jews used only fermented wine at the Passover. The Bible nowhere condemns the drinking of alcoholic beverages--only their abuse. If we obey Jesus' command--"This do...in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25)--we will drink a very small amount of wine once each year at the Passover service in remembrance of Christ's shed blood.

4. Had Jesus previously told the Pharisees, in a statement they did not understand, that unless a person symbolically eats His body and drinks His blood, he has no hope of receiving eternal life? John 6:48,John 6:53-54.

COMMENT: Some believe that when Jesus said "This is my body...this is my blood," or spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He meant those statements to be understood literally--that the bread and the wine miraculously become His literal flesh and blood. This is not what Jesus

meant at all! The word "is" (in both Greek and English) also means "represents." That is its obvious meaning in Matthew 13:38,for example. The unleavened bread and wine are symbols that represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ!

5. Does Jesus' command to follow His example in taking unleavened bread and wine at the Passover (Luke 22:19-20)also apply to Christians throughout all ages? Matthew 28:19-20;1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

COMMENT: Jesus instituted this ordinance on the eve of His crucifixion. He showed His disciples how to keep the New Testament Passover and commands us to follow that example today.

Jesus did not abolish the Passover--He merely changed the symbols used. Instead of shedding the blood of a lamb and eating its roasted body, we are now to use unleavened bread and wine.

Why Christ Had to Suffer

After Christ instituted the New Testament Passover symbols, He gave His disciples some final instructions and warnings, as well as encouragement. These are recorded for us by the Apostle John in John 13:31John 16:33.

Read this entire passage and notice how Jesus used this opportunity not to do away with God's law, but to emphasize it! He warned the disciples of His imminent crucifixion and that they would also be persecuted. He promised that He would be resurrected and that they would receive the Holy Spirit. He promised to answer their prayers, giving them the authority to use His name in their requests to the Father.

Then, in John 17:1-26, we find the true "Lord's prayer," which Jesus Himself prayed. In it He committed not only His disciples into His Father's care, but all whom He would call into His Church through the ages. After Jesus finished this prayer, He and His disciples sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives (John 18:1;Matthew 26:30;Luke 22:39).

There He prayed again. Knowing how excruciatingly painful His death would be, Jesus prayed with great fervency to escape the extreme pain and suffering that was to come (Luke 22:41-44). Three times He asked His Father if it would be possible to begin His plan of salvation for mankind in some other way (Matthew 26:39-44). "Nevertheless," Jesus prayed, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Then Christ, betrayed by one of His disciples, was arrested like a common criminal, and all His friends deserted Him (Matthew 26:47-56). He was illegally brought before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish court) by night, beaten and spit upon (Matthew 26:67), then sent to Pilate and Herod and mocked by their soldiers (Luke 23:11;John 19:2-3). Yet in all this Jesus never sinned, never became angry or vindictive--not even when crucified! (Luke 23:34). He knew all of this was an essential part in God's plan to expand His divine Family. Seeing the end result, He counted it all joy (Hebrews 12:2).

1. Before delivering Christ to be crucified, did Pilate have Him scourged? Matthew 27:26.Was He so brutally beaten that He became unrecognizable? Isaiah 52:14.Also read Isaiah 52:13Isaiah 53:12,and Psalms 22:1, Psalms 22:6-8, Psalms 22:13-18 of Psalms 22:1-31.

COMMENT: These prophecies in Isaiah and in the Psalms were written hundreds of years in advance. They vividly described the suffering the coming Messiah--our Savior--was to experience!

Scourging was a common punishment in the time of Christ, but in our modern times we have difficulty imagining such cruelty. The victim was stripped to the waist, bent over and tied to a post, and then beaten with a flagellum--a multi-lashed whip made of leather thongs weighted down with broken shards of bone and sharp jagged pieces of metal. In a Roman scourging, called the "halfway death," the victim was beaten until just short of dying from the multiple wounds.

Christ suffered this merciless beating, which tore open His flesh, disfigured Him, and caused Him to bleed from dozens of open gashes and cuts. Even some of His ribs were exposed. Most victims were allowed to recover, but Jesus was not. Like a criminal, He was then forced to carry His own stake, but He was so weakened by His terrible chastisement that He fell under its weight after only a short distance. Outside the city, at the Place of the Skull (Golgotha), Jesus was nailed to the cross.

Crucifixion was the most shameful--and most painful--form of execution. Not only were spikes driven into the hands and feet and the body suspended from these open wounds, but breathing was also agonizingly difficult. Victims would sometimes struggle on their crosses for as long as three days, suffering pain, sunstroke, heat exhaustion and loss of blood, finally dying from muscle exhaustion and suffocation. Our Savior suffered an incredibly painful, brutal death. And He did this voluntarily. He did this for us--for the whole world!

2. Did Jesus suffer this excruciatingly painful torture so we might receive healing of our bodies through faith in His beaten body? Isaiah 53:5:1 Peter 2:24:Psalms 103:2-3:James 5:14-15.

COMMENT: Through His beating, scourging and crucifixion, Jesus Christ paid the penalty of our physical sins--transgressions of God’s laws of health--which are the cause of all sickness (Matthew 9:1-7). He suffered so we, through faith in His body that was beaten for us, may be forgiven all our physical sins--the healing of our bodies when we are sick--in addition to being forgiven our spiritual sins (the breaking of God’s spiritual laws) through His shed blood. That is why Jesus instituted the breaking of unleavened bread as part of the New Testament Passover service. It is a symbol of His broken flesh to remind us that it is by His "stripes we are healed." (For more information about, this important subject, request our free booklet The Plain Truth About Healing.) Why Christ Had to Die

Jesus Christ did more than suffer for us. He who was God in the flesh died--ceased to exist! In that day His thoughts perished (Psalms 146:4). Since He was made flesh, He died the same kind of death all mortals do. But exactly why did He have to die? Let’s understand.

1. Was Jesus Christ, before His human birth, the "Word" or Spokesman of the God Family--the One by whom God the Father created all things? John 1:1-3,John 1:14; Colossians 1:16-17;Ephesians 3:9;Hebrews 1:2,Hebrews 1:10.

2. Did the God Family foreordain that the Spokesman would become a human who would be slain, like a lamb, to become our Savior? 1 Peter 1:18-20;Revelation 13:8.

----------Inset---------- TWELVE REASONS WHY JESUS’ TRIAL WAS ILLEGAL THE trial of Jesus Christ was without legal precedent. He was convicted and executed even though

Pilate found Him innocent! Let’s briefly notice the 12 outstanding reasons why the arrest, trial and conviction of Jesus were illegal.

1. There was no legal basis for Jesus’ arrest because no one had presented a formal charge of any crime; He simply was taken. Moreover, those who went with Judas to have Jesus arrested included the priests and elders--His judges (Luke 22:52)--among whom were the ones who bribed Judas!

2. Jesus was subjected to a secret preliminary examination at night (John 18:12-14,John 18:19-23), Jewish law permitted only daylight proceedings.

3. The indictment against Jesus was illegal because the judges themselves brought up the charge without any prior testimony by witnesses. The Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) by law was not allowed to originate charges.

4. The court illegally proceeded to hold its trial of Jesus before sunrise so no one would be available to testify on His behalf.

5. The trial began on a day before an annual Sabbath (John 18:28), even though Jewish law did not permit the trial of a capital offense to begin on a Friday or the day before an annual Sabbath. Jesus was arrested and tried on the 14th of Abib, the day before the first annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

6. Jesus’ trial was concluded in one day. Jewish law says: "If a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it [a criminal case] cannot be concluded before the following day" (Mishna, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1). This was to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves. Jesus’ trial was conducted in private and completed in less than nine hours!

7. Two false witnesses charged Jesus with saying He would destroy the temple made with hands (Mark 14:58); yet He was condemned by the court on another false charge--that of blasphemy. He was condemned on His own testimony (Luke 22:67-71). But according to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned on his own testimony.

8. The merits of Jesus’ defense were not considered. Despite Deuteronomy 13:14,the high priest did not "inquire, and make search, and ask diligently" to see whether Jesus’ statement was blasphemous. The law in the Misha says: "The judges shall weigh the matter in the sincerity of their conscience" ("Sanhedrin" IV, 5). Instead, the court pronounced sentence instantly and unanimously!

9. Those who would have voted against condemnation were not at Jesus’ trial. Joseph of Arimathaea was a member of the court, yet he was not there (Luke 23:50-51). Jesus’ opponents had made sure that only those who hated Him would be there.

10. The sentence was pronounced in a place forbidden by law. The trial took place at the high priest’s house (Luke 22:54). According to the law, a death sentence could be pronounced only in the court’s appointed place.

11. Most of the judges were legally disqualified to try Jesus. Some had bought their way into office, according to Josephus. Also, since they were known enemies of Jesus, Jewish law required that they disqualify themselves so He could be tried by impartial judges.

12. The court illegally switched the charges from blasphemy to treason before Pilate. Jesus' opponents wanted Him killed, but they did not want to do it themselves. So they charged Him with treason (Luke 23:2)--a Roman crime--so the Romans would be responsible for His death. No evidence was presented (John 18:29-30). Pilate, after a brief interview, saw that Jesus was not guilty (John 18:38;John 19:4;Matthew 27:18). Fearing the crowd, however, he allowed the crucifixion of an innocent man. Pilate did not even pronounce Him guilty; he merely turned Him over to the soldiers.

What a mockery of justice this trial was! All this illegality, in addition to His crucifixion, Jesus willingly suffered to pay the penalty of our sins in our stead!

----------End of Inset----------

3. Did our Creator become a flesh-and-blood human being by being miraculously conceived in a human woman? John 1:14;Matthew 1:20-21.Why was He made flesh? Hebrews 2:9.Is Jesus Christ plainly called "God" and "our Saviour"? Titus 2:13-14.

COMMENT: The penalty for human sin is death. But the two members of the God Family, composed of spirit, could not die. Neither one of those immortal spirit Beings could pay the penalty of human sin. It was therefore necessary that one of the God Kingdom be born as a human being and die to pay the penalty. The Word, the second member of the God Family, volunteered. He willingly gave up His spirit composition and great glory to be begotten and born as a mortal flesh-and-blood, air-breathing human being.

Since the Word had created all life, His life was worth infinitely more than the thousands of millions who have ever lived. Had Jesus Christ been merely a man, His death could have paid the death penalty perhaps for only one other person. But Jesus was also God in the flesh! By emptying Himself of His former power and glory and becoming a human being, Christ became the perfect and complete sacrifice for all sins ever committed by mankind. In no other way could God redeem a vast humanity condemned to the penalty of death.

4. Was the Apostle Paul inspired to write that Christ is "our Passover"--our Savior--today? 1 Corinthians 5:7.

COMMENT: If the original Passover lambs had not been slain, the Israelites' firstborn would have been killed in Egypt. And unless Christ was killed, we would not have a Savior today. The Israelites killed their Passover lambs by shedding their blood (Exodus 12:6-7). As these lambs were types of Christ "our Passover," and died by bloodshed, so Christ's blood was also shed to pay for our sins--our transgressions of God's law.

5. Does the Bible clearly show that it was necessary for Christ to die by the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of our sins? Hebrews 9:22.

COMMENT: Only by Christ's shed blood can we receive the remission-- forgiveness--of our spiritual sins. (Of course, we know from Acts 2:38 that repentance and baptism are also necessary

in connection with His shed blood.)

6. Did Isaiah foretell that Christ would die as a lamb led to the slaughter? Isaiah 53:7-8.Does the conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch plainly show that Isaiah was referring to Jesus Christ? Acts 8:32-35.

7. Did Isaiah also prophesy that Christ would die by pouring out His "soul"--His life? Isaiah 53:12.Is the life of all flesh in the blood? Leviticus 17:11.

COMMENT: Christ died by bleeding to death. This is evident from His prophesied sacrificial role, and it is also supported by many ancient Greek manuscripts. Fenton, as well Moffatt, correctly includes the following sentence as the first part of Matthew 27:50 in his translation: "But another [one of the Roman soldiers] taking a spear pierced His side, when blood and water came out."

Notice also John 19:34.It may be translated "But one of the soldiers with a spear had pierced his side...", indicating why He was already dead (John 19:33). For further proof that Christ bled to death, request our free article "Did Christ Die of a Broken Heart?"

Most of us have never before understood Jesus' suffering and death. What a mockery of justice it was! Can you imagine what it would have been like if you had been on trial, if you had been treated like Jesus Christ was? Can you imagine the agony involved in being scourged and crucified, and then murdered as He was?

All this suffering Jesus voluntarily endured to pay the penalty of our sins in our stead!

Just think of the tremendous price Christ paid so we might have our guilty past blotted out, and the slate wiped clean. Can you comprehend that our Creater--the One who gives us every breath--suffered and died for every one of us?

Kept by the New Testament Church

1. After Jesus Christ had changed the symbols of the Passover to unleavened bread and wine, and commanded His disciples to keep this New Testament service in memory of His suffering and death, is there indication that God's Church kept the Passover more than 10 years after Christ's crucifixion? Acts 12:4.

COMMENT: The word Easter in the Authorized Version is a flagrant mistranslation. The Greek word is pascha, which all modern translations correctly render "Passover."

2. Did the Apostle Paul teach New Testament Christians to keep the Passover by partaking of the symbols of unleavened bread and wine as Jesus had done and commanded? 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

COMMENT: Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, taught baptized Gentiles to keep the Passover! Paul spent much of his time in and near Ephesus, which was in western Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). History shows that the churches in Asia Minor continued to keep the New Testament Passover long after most other churches had been taken over by a counterfeit Christianity. The apostles appointed Polycarp over the Church of God in Smyrna, a city near Ephesus. Notice what Eusebius, an early Catholic historian, wrote about him:

"While Anicetus was at the head of the church of Rome [about A.D. 154], Irenaeus relates that Polycarp...had a conference with Anicetus on a question concerning the day of the Pascal feast [the Passover].... But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and acquainted with many that had seen Christ, but was also appointed by apostles in Asia bishop of the church of Smyrna [Revelation 2:8].... He also was in Rome in the time of Anicetus and caused many to turn away from the...heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received from the apostles this one and only system of truth" (Ecclesiastical History, book IV, chapter 14, in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1).

While at Rome, Polycarp discussed the Roman practice of observing a pagan festival in place of the Passover. Notice what Eusebius wrote about this meeting: "Neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed [the Passover] with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated" (book V, chapter 24). The Passover controversy broke out again within 35 years. Victor, bishop of Rome, attempted to excommunicate every church that observed the true Passover!

Eusebius further relates: "But the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates [a later bishop of Ephesus], decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him: 'We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints.

"'Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles...moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord...and Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr.... All these observed the fourteenth day...the Passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates...do according to the tradition of my relatives.... My relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven [in preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread]'" (book V, chapter 24).

3. Was it prophesied that the Church of God in Smyrna would suffer persecution? Revelation 2:8-10.Who would be their persecutors? Revelation 2:9.

COMMENT: The "synagogue of Satan," composed of those who claimed to be "spiritual Jews"--that is, true Christians--but were not, is the false religion now labeled "Christianity" and founded by the Simon mentioned in Acts 8:9-24.Almighty God calls this counterfeit church the synagogue of Satan the devil!

4. Will the Passover be kept by Christ and others after He establishes the Kingdom of God on earth? Matthew 26:29;Luke 22:15-16.In the meantime, was the Passover to be kept by God's Church as a memorial of Christ's suffering and death? 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.

COMMENT: Jesus commanded His disciples to keep the Passover in memory of Him even until He returns, when He will keep it again. The apostles did keep it, and God's Church today is still keeping it exactly as Jesus commanded! A Memorial Commanded Once a Year

1. Was the yearly observance of the Old Testament Passover to remind the Israelites of the meaning of this service? Exodus 12:24-27.Is the observance of the New Testament Passover to

remind Christians of Christ’s sacrifice? 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.Did Jesus institute this ordinance at a certain time as an example for us? 1 Corinthians 11:23;Luke 22:14-15.

COMMENT: Christ taught by His example that the New Testament Passover should be taken only once a year--on the 14th of Abib, in the evening, after the 13th has ended at sunset.

Christians today should keep the Passover not as often as they please or at whatever time they please, but as often as and at the same time as Christ and the apostles did. The Passover is a memorial we are to keep in remembrance of Christ’s suffering and death. Memorials of momentous occasions are always observed annually--once a year--on the anniversary of the event they commemorate. As Christ Himself commanded, true Christians today observe the Passover on the evening of the day of His suffering and death. It is the most solemn and sacred occasion of the year--definitely not a time for laughter or socializing. It reaffirms year by year "till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26)the true Christian’s faith in Christ’s sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

Any other day is not a memorial of Christ’s suffering and death, but is merely an invention of men in contradiction to the direct command of Jesus Christ! The exact date for the Passover, and all of God’s annual festivals, varies from year to year on the Roman calendar. The correct dates for all the festivals over the next several years are listed in our free publication God’s Sacred Calendar.

Taking the Passover Worthily

Before concluding this study of the first step in God’s great Master Plan, we need to realize that we could take the New Testament Passover "unworthily"--if we do not heed a warning from the Apostle Paul. Let’s understand.

1. What did Paul warn the Corinthian Christians regarding their observance of the New Testament Passover? 1 Corinthians 11:27.What should a person do before taking the symbols of the unleavened bread and the wine? 1 Corinthians 11:28. What happens if the symbols are taken "unworthily"? 1 Corinthians 11:29. Is this why many of them were sick and many had died? 1 Corinthians 11:30.

COMMENT: Many today have not understood Paul’s warning. Some, feeling they are not "worthy" of Jesus’ sacrifice, have concluded they should not observe the Passover. Others have taken the New Testament Passover symbols in a casual or ritualistic manner, not fully understanding their meaning. Both extremes are wrong!

Paul was not saying a Christian must be "worthy" to take the Passover. He wrote that no one should observe the Passover unworthily. "Unworthily" does not describe the person--it describes the manner or attitude in which a person eats and drinks the symbols. Most modern translations, such as the Revised Standard version and the Revised Authorised versions, correctly render "unworthily" as "in an unworthy manner."

Obviously, no one is worthy of Christ’s sacrifice. Nevertheless, all true Christians are commanded to observe this memorial of our Savior’s death for our sins. Notice Paul’s command in verse 28: "Let a man examine himself...." Why? To conclude he is not worthy, and to refuse to obey? No--the person should examine himself "and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Before each Passover, every true Christian should examine himself to more fully understand his vital need to observe the Passover. A spiritual self-examination will show each Christian that he or she is still a sinner in desperate need of Christ’s sacrifice. Observing the Passover is a profound annual reminder of our physical and spiritual sins, and a reminder that Christ has paid in full the penalty of those sins, as long as we truly repent of them (1 John 1:9).

Paul also wrote that certain of the Corinthian Christians were "not discerning the Lord’s body" (1 Corinthians 11:29). Many of them had not taken the Passover in a worthy manner. They had not fully understood the fack that Christ paid in His body the penalty of their physical sins, represented by the broken bread, and thus their illnesses had not been healed. For that reason many of them also had died (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Many of these brethren were so lacking in discernment that they thought they were coming together on the evening of the Passover to eat a regular meal. Some even got drunk, says Paul! (1 Corinthians 11:20-21, 1 Corinthians 11:33-34). Paul therefore had to sternly correct them. The symbols of the Passover should be taken thoughtfully and with renewed faith--with a thorough understanding and comprehension of the REALITY these symbols represent!

2. In ancient Israel, who was permitted to partake of the Passover? Exodus 12:48,last part. In New Testament times, is circumcision of the heart? Romans 2:29.

COMMENT: In ancient Israel, only Israelites and circumcised Gentiles could take part in the Passover. Today, whether Jew, Israelite or Gentile, one must first become spiritually circumcised before he can participate in the New Testament Passover service. Our previous studies have shown that those who repent, are baptized and have received God’s Holy Spirit have become "spiritual Israelites"--have become spiritually circumcised. If a person has not repented--not yet shown faith in Christ as Savior through the symbolism of baptism--he or she is not able to take the Passover worthily. Therefore the Passover, unlike any of God’s other annual festivals, is limited to baptized members of God’s Church. Do We Stop with the Passover?

Many religions of the Christian-professing world teach that Christ’s sacrifice completed the plan of salvation--that there is nothing more for us to do but believe.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

Christ’s Passover sacrifice only began God’s Master Plan of salvation. Christ’s sacrifice, upon our repentance, paid the penalty of our past sins (Romans 3:24-25). But it does not give us permission to break God’s laws with impunity in the future. We must strive to forsake sin--to put it out of our lives. That is what the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the next annual festival and step in God’s plan, pictures for us.

Many professing Christians claim to "accept" Christ’s sacrifice. But God has not applied that sacrifice to them. They are still unrepentant sinners--they refuse to obey Him, claiming His laws are done away.

Christ is not the minister of sin (Galatians 2:17). Not until we repent of sin, believe and begin to obey God can we be forgiven. Christ’s sacrifice will be applied only to those who show by their actions that they are truly repentant.

If you have not yet begun to participate in God’s great plan of salvation and want to do so, then you will want more information regarding baptism so you can keep the New Testament Passover as God commands. You may write or call our office nearest you to learn how to contact a minister of the Worldwide Church of God in your area. Be sure to mention that you have completed Lesson 25 of The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross A. completed God’s plan of salvation.

B. did not complete the work the Father had commissioned Jesus to do.

C. was the first step in God’s plan of salvation.

D. was justly deserved because He was guilty of blasphemy and treason.

2. God’s seven annual festivals and Sabbaths A. were for the ancient Israelites only.

B. were ceremonial occasions needed only so long as the law of Moses was in force.

C. should be observed by Jewish Christians, but not by Gentile Christians.

D. keep God’s Church in a right understanding of the true way to salvation.

3. When God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, they A. were told to keep all their old customs.

B. had to modify a few of their customs.

C. needed a complete reorganization of their social, religious and work customs.

D. were allowed to continue to use the Egyptian calendar.

4. The first month of the year according to the Hebrew religious calendar A. was originally named Nisan by Moses at the time of the exodus from Egypt.

B. is named Abib, from a Hebrew word meaning "ears" or "green ears of grain."

C. is in midwinter in the Northern Hemisphere.

D. is the time when winter wheat and barley are planted in the Northern Hemisphere.

5. God instituted the festival of Passover A. just before the Israelites left Egypt.

B. after the Israelites had broken covenant and needed sacrifices.

C. as a ritual sacrifice to pay for sins under the covenant made at Sinai.

D. immediately after Adam and Eve sinned.

6. The lambs killed in the first Passover pictured the Messiah, who A. was slain on the 14th of Abib.

B. was without spiritual blemish, sin or spot.

C. is the Lamb of God.

D. All of the above.

7. After the Israelites killed their Passover lambs, A. they remained outside their homes until they saw the death angel pass over them.

B. they drank a small amount of the blood in a symbolic ceremony.

C. they smeared some of the blood on the doorposts of their homes.

D. they boiled the flesh and ate it.

8. God protected the Israelites from the plague of death of the firstborn A. through the lamb's blood they had smeared on their doorposts.

B. because the plague was a genetic disorder that affected only the Egyptians.

C. by leading them out of Egypt before the plague.

D. because they had partaken of unleavened bread and a little wine.

9. Jesus Christ A. may have kept the Passover, though the Bible doesn't directly say.

B. kept the Passover both as a child and during His New Testament ministry.

C. never kept the Passover.

D. told His disciples that the annual festivals would be unnecessary after His crucifixion.

10. Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover service A. using new symbols to represent His sacrifice.

B. on the eve of His suffering and death.

C. and commanded His disciples to teach others to keep it also.

D. All of the above.

11. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Foot washing was an Old Testament ritual and therefore is part of the Passover service today.

B. Jesus instituted foot washing as part of the new way of observing Passover.

C. Christ told Peter he could have no part with Him unless he participated in the foot washing.

D. Christ commanded His disciples to teach others what they had been taught by Him.

12. Jesus instituted the observance of foot washing in connection with the New Testament Passover because it was a A. ritual cleansing of the dirtiest part of the body.

B. symbol of service, an example His disciples and all true Christians were to follow.

C. symbol that He was no longer needed as their Lord and Master.

D. All of the above.

13. After Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He instituted new symbols for the Passover-- A. special leavened wafers and grape juice.

B. these become His literal body and blood.

C. broken unleavened bread and wine.

D. and commanded the disciples to use these symbols every Sunday.

14. Which one of the following statements is TRUE?

A. Jesus was given the fairest trial possible.

B. Despite the brutal treatment of Jesus, He never became angry or vindictive.

C. The soldiers knew Jesus was harmless and therefore treated Him gently.

D. Pilate knew Jesus deserved to die.

15. Before Jesus was nailed to the cross, He was A. scourged ultilashed whip.

B. beaten and spit on.

C. wounded with dozens of disfiguring gashes and bleeding cuts.

D. All of the above.

16. Jesus suffered His excruciating toture and death A. so that He could pay the penalty of sins for all humanity.

B. merely to fulfill prophecy.

C. because He taught His deciples to disavow the laws of the Roman Empire.

D. because He was guilty of blasphemy and treason.

17. By partaking of the unleavened bread at the Passover service, true Christians A. symbolize Jesus' shed blood for the remission or forgiveness of sins.

B. demonstrate a lack of commitment to God and His way of life.

C. renew their commitment to be willing to partake of Christ's sufferings, to suffer as a Christian for righteousness' sake.

D. are reminded that everyone is called now to be a part of the body of Christ.

18. Unlike many victims of crucifixion who agonized on their crosses for up to three days, Jesus died in about six hours. Why did He die so quickly?

A. The soldiers broke His legs and He suffocated.

B. One of the soldiers speared Him in the side and He bled to death.

C. His heart spontaneously ruptured from His emotional agony.

D. He was in poor health and very weak.

19. Jesus Christ was able to pay the penalty of the sins of all mankind because He was A. perfectly sinless and did not deserve to either suffer or die.

B. our Creator and therefore worth more than all humanity put together.

C. the Lamb of God, foreordained to shed His blood as our Passover Savior.

D. All of the above.

20. Paul told the Gentile Christians at Corinth about the New Testament Passover A. and commanded them to observe it.

B. only for its historical analogy.

C. because he had heard about it from the Apostle Peter.

D. but explained to them that it was an optional service.

21. History records that the churches in Asia Minor A. soon began to celebrate Christ’s resurrection rather than His crucifixion.

B. kept the Passover long after most other churches had been absorbed by a counterfeit Christianity.

C. convinced the bishop or Rome to keep the Passover the way Christ had commanded.

D. had been taught by the apostles to observe Easter.

22. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Polycarp, a bishop or elder from Smyrna, said he had observed the Passover with the Apostle John.

B. Polycrates, a later bishop who succeeded Polycarp, persisted in observing "the day when the people put away the leaven."

C. When Christ returns, He will abolish the Passover as completely fulfilled and therefore unnecessary.

D. Jesus commanded His followers to keep the Passover in memory of Him even until He returns.

23. How often should the New Testament Passover, commonly called the "Lord’s Supper," be observed?

A. As often as anyone wishes.

B. this is established by the traditions of each denomination.

C. Once in a lifetime, as an initiatory commitment.

D. As often as Christ observed its Old Testament equivalent--as often as the early true Church did--once each year.

24. Paul told the Corinthian Christians to A. not take the Passover in a disrespectful and unworthy manner.

B. have a large potluck meal before the Passover service.

C. examine themselves after each Passover.

D. be worthy of Christ’s sacrifice.

25. The Passover service is A. open to anyone who is curious.

B. limited to baptized members of God’s Church--spiritually circumcised individuals who have faith in Christ’s sacrifice.

C. the only annual festival God commands His people to observe.

D. unnecessary, despite what the Bible says.

Lesson 26 Part 1

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course Part 1

Lesson 26

1986

_____ FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD _____ Our Part in God’s Master Plan. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ made possible the forgiveness of our past sins--the first step in God’s Master Plan. The second annual festival of God pictures the NEXT STEP in His plan of salvation for mankind.

MOST of modern Christianity teaches that there is nothing more for us to do but believe in Christ’s sacrifice for our sins. No wonder He is portrayed as a dead Savior hanging on a cross!

Christ’s death, pictured by the Passover, was necessary to pay the penalty of our past sins--to reconcile us to the Father. But His death alone will not save us! Think, for a moment, if Jesus Christ had died but not been resurrected. Would His death alone make eternal life possible? Of course not!

Accepting Christ’s sacrifice is only the first step in God’s plan for bringing humans into His divine Family. Shall We Continue to Sin?

What should we do once our past sins have been covered by the shed blood of Christ? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" asked the Apostle Paul. "Certainly not!" was his emphatic answer (Romans 6:1-2,RAV). "Shall we sin because we are not under [the penalty of the] law but under grace? Certainly not!" (Romans 6:15).

We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31,RAV).

Someone once asked Jesus: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:16-17). As we learned in previous lessons, God is now in the process of creating holy, righteous, perfect spiritual character in those whom He has called into His Church. Man, now only a clay model, is to be created in the character-image of God Almighty.

Since the Ten Commandments describe God’s nature and character, keeping His law is absolutely necessary for spiritual character growth. We must therefore obey the Master Potter, allowing Him to mold His character in us while we are still flesh and blood.

We Must Forsake Sin Our acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice in payment for the penalty of our sins is only the first step toward salvation. Once we have repented of our sins and been forgiven by God, He wants us to forsake sin!

God commands us to come out of this world's ways of sin (Revelation 18:4)-- just as ancient Israel left Egypt, a symbol for sin (Hebrews 11:25-26). We must be striving to come out of all sin. That is OUR PART, with Christ's help, in God's plan of salvation. To keep us in the knowledge of the second step in God's plan, Christ, the LORD of the Old Testament, instituted the second annual festival--the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The observance of this Feast impresses upon us that we must do our part to keep the sins Jesus covered with His shed blood out of our lives henceforth.

Leaven is also a symbol for sin (1 Corinthians 5:8). God commanded the ancient Israelites to put all leaven out of their homes and off their property and eat unleavened bread during this seven-day festival. And so the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to remind God's people today that they are to strive to put SIN completely out of their lives!

After repentance and baptism, God expects us to strive to keep His law- -to spiritually "unleaven" our lives, just as we are to physically unleaven our homes before the Feast. The act of eating unleavened bread during the Feast teaches us the opposite of sin--OBEDIENCE to God! The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the keeping of God's commandments, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin. To observe only the Passover, and then fail to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is comparable to accepting Christ's sacrifice and then saying the law of God is done away--that because we are "under grace" we have permission to continue to sin. Your Bible shows Christ is not a "minister of sin"! (Galatians 2:17).

"Let Us Keep the Feast"! In the simplest and clearest New Testament command to observe God's annual festivals and Holy Days, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Gentile Christians at Corinth: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). The context, as we shall see in this lesson, makes it very clear that Paul was referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

Christians today are not only to commemorate Christ's sacrifice by observing the Passover, they are also to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These two annual festivals are inseparable, both historically and in spiritual meaning for us today.

Let's begin to understand the full meaning of this second annual festival picturing the next step in God's plan. Let's learn what the Bible tells us about our part in God's Master Plan.

LESSON 26 The First Feast of Unleavened Bread Our study of God's second annual festival begins with the events of the very first Feast of Unleavened Bread, instituted at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. As we learned in previous lessons, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt. God, through a series of miraculous plagues, began to deliver them from their captors.

Recall that in the evening of the 14th of Abib each Israelite family killed the lamb it had selected, and then smeared some of its blood on the doorposts of their houses. This protected their firstborn from the plague of death (Exodus 12:6-7,Exodus 12:12-13). Each lamb was symbolic of "Christ our Passover," the "Lamb of God," and its blood pictured Christ's blood, which would be shed much later to pay the penalty of our spiritual sins--eternal death.

1. For how long were the Israelites to remain in their houses on the night of the 14th? Exodus 12:22,last part. What were they to do early in the morning? Exodus 12:10.

2. What did the people do during the night of the 15th? Exodus 12:37, Exodus 12:42; Numbers 33:3;Deuteronomy 16:1.Was the 15th the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Leviticus 23:6.

COMMENT: The Israelites were protected from the death angel as a result of applying lamb's blood to the doorposts of their houses and remaining inside that night. Early in the morning they burned the leftovers of their roasted lambs. Then on "the morrow after the Passover," they started "out of Egypt by night. "

3. Were the Israelites to especially remember their deliverance from Egypt? Exodus 13:3-4.In what way did God, through Moses, command the Israelites to commemorate their deliverance? Exodus 13:3, last part, Exodus 13:6-7; Exodus 12:15-20.

COMMENT: Moses had told the people to put out all of their leaven according to God's instructions. And in their escape from Egypt, their dough did not have enough time to naturally ferment and rise (Exodus 12:33-34,Exodus 12:39). Therefore the eating of unleavened bread was to be an appropriate yearly reminder--a memorial--of the haste with which they fled Egypt. But as we'll learn later in this lesson, much greater symbolic meaning is attached to leaven in the New Testament. We'll come to understand the spiritual meaning of putting leaven out and eating unleavened bread during the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread.

4. After camping at Succoth, where did God tell the Israelites to go? Exodus 13:20;Exodus 14:1-2.Did Pharaoh and his army pursue them? Exodus 14:5-8.Where did the Egyptian army catch up with the Israelites? Exodus 14:9. (For details on the route of the exodus, see the map and commentary on page 7.)

COMMENT: It was on the sixth day of Unleavened Bread that the Egyptian army overtook the Israelites encamped near Pi-hahiroth. Mountains made escape impossible to the south and west. The Red Sea, to the east, was nearly eight miles across at that point, and Pharaoh's army stood due north of the Israelites. They were trapped!

Knowing that Pharaoh would pursue his ex-slaves (Exodus 14:3-4), God told the Israelites to leave the normally traveled road. He led them into a trap for their own good to prove to them, and to us today, that He alone offers salvation--if we will trust Him. (This vital truth will be discussed again later in this lesson.) 5. When the people understood their predicament, what was their reaction? Exodus 14:10-12.

COMMENT: Elation and joy turned into fear and anger when the Israelites realized it was humanly impossible to escape from Pharaoh.

6. How did God provide an escape route for the trapped Israelites? Exodus 14:13-16, Exodus 14:19-22. What did He do to the Egyptian chariots when Pharaoh's army tried to follow? Exodus 14:23-25. What happened to the Egyptians? Exodus 14:26-28.

COMMENT: The supernatural pillar of the cloud and fire, by which God led the Israelites (Exodus 13:21-22), moved behind them to protect them from the Egyptian army. Then God, altering the forces of nature, opened a pathway through the Red Sea to allow the people to walk across. God Almighty miraculously delivered Israel from Pharaoh's army!

Tradition has it that the miraculous opening of the Red Sea and the completion of the Israelites' escape from slavery took place before dawn on the seventh and last day of the first Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then, on the daylight part of this annual Holy Sabbath, there was great rejoicing in celebration of their complete delivery from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 15:1-21). The Feast in Ancient Israel

After the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt, they promised to obey God. But they failed utterly except for the times God gave them a righteous ruler. Under the leadership of Joshua, who succeeded Moses, the Israelites obeyed God (Judges 2:7). But after his death and the death of the elders of that generation, the next generation did not.

God punished the people for their disobedience, but when they cried out to Him for help, He sent a righteous ruler to deliver them. After he died, however, the people went even further into sin, especially idolatry (Judges 2:10-12, Judges 2:18-19). This cycle was repeated many times during the period of the judges.

During the reign of righteous King David, the Israelites prospered greatly as they did in Solomon's reign. But all of the later kings of Israel and most in Judah disobeyed God, leading the nations further and further into sin. They were cursed and eventually taken captive; Israel first and then Judah more than 100 years later.

1. Prior to Judah's captivity, however, a king named Hezekiah did what was right in God's sight (2 Chronicles 29:1-2). Did Hezekiah realize that Judah's national troubles were the result of the nation having forsaken God? 2 Chronicles 29:6-9.

2. What did Hezekiah therefore begin to do to the Temple of God, which had fallen into disrepair? 2 Chronicles 29:3. And what did he command the Levites to do? 2 Chronicles 29:4-5, 2 Chronicles 29:10-11.

3. What did Hezekiah do after the priesthood had been rededicated to the service of God? 2 Chronicles 30:1-5.Did he know that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was also to be kept? 2 Chronicles 30:21.

COMMENT: During the reigns of the wicked kings before Hezekiah, God's Temple had been closed. The people had forgotten God's laws and festivals, and were following the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations around them. But when Hezekiah became king, he restored the true worship of God, including the observance of His annual festivals.

However, the first Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to be kept in many years were not observed in the month of Abib. The priesthood was not properly prepared in time, and the people had not yet gathered in Jerusalem to attend these festivals. Following the principle in Numbers 9:9-12 for observing the Passover one month later if necessary, they observed it and immediately afterward the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

God prospered the nation for returning to Him under the righteous rule of Hezekiah. But after Hezekiah's death, the Jews again forgot God and His festivals. They returned to idolatry under the wicked rule of kings Manasseh and Amon. Not until the reign of Josiah were God's annual feasts again restored.

4. Was Josiah a righteous king? 2 Chronicles 34:1-3.Had the Temple again fallen into disuse and disrepair before his reign began? 2 Chronicles 34:8-11. After the repair work had begun, what did the high priest find in the Temple? 2 Chronicles 34:14. What did Josiah publicly promise to do? 2 Chronicles 34:31. Did he lead all the people to obey God? 2 Chronicles 34:32-33.

5. What did Josiah command the people to do regarding the Passover? 2 Kings 23:21;2 Chronicles 35:1.Did he understand that God expected His people to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread also? 2 Chronicles 35:17.

----------Inset---------- ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

Let’s briefly examine, with the help of the map to the right, (Not Included) the route of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt. Keep in mind that most Bible atlases and commentaries do not show the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Many also misplace most other locations mentioned in the Bible. The route shown is as close as we can determine based on the biblical account. The Israelites, most of whom were living in the land of Goshen, kill and eat the Passover lamb on the evening of the 14th and stay in their homes until morning (Exodus 12:6-8,Exodus 12:22). Pharaoh, after midnight, calls for Moses to tell them to leave Egypt (Exodus 12:29-31). The Israelites then gather at Rameses during the daylight part of the 14th (Exodus 12:33-37).

They leave Rameses on the night of the 15th and encamp at Succoth (Deuteronomy 16:1;Numbers 33:3;Exodus 12:37)on the weekly Sabbath during this first Feast of Unleavened Bread.

God does not lead the Israelites by "the way of the land of the Philistines," the shortest route to Canaan (Exodus 13:17). Instead, He leads them southeast, toward Mt. Sinai, at first along "the way of the wilderness of the Red sea"(Exodus 13:18). This is to fulfill His promise to take them first to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 3:1-12). From Succoth, the Israelites go to Etham, at the edge of the wilderness (Exodus 13:20). God then tells them to turn south and go into the wilderness west of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-2). On the sixth day of the Feast, the Israelites encamp by the seashore northeast of the Pi-hahiroth range of mountains, which jut abruptly into the sea. There they are trapped by the mountains to the south and west, the Red Sea to the east and Pharaoh’s army to the north (Exodus 14:3-10).

God then opens a pathway through the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to walk across (Exodus 14:21-22). Pharaoh’s army pursues and is drowned (Exodus 14:23-31). On the east coast of the Red Sea, there is great rejoicing in the camp of Israel on the seventh and last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 15:1-21). The Israelites then travel southeast, roughly parallel to the Red Sea. Along the way they stop at a number of places, including Marah and Elim (Exodus 15:22-23,27), before heading east, arriving at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1-2)nearly seven weeks later.

----------End of inset----------

COMMENT: After Josiah died, most of the Jews again lost sight of God, ignored His weekly Sabbaths and rejected His annual festivals. To bring the people to repentance, God punished them by allowing the entire nation of Judah to be militarily defeated and taken captive by the Babylonians.

6. Seventy years later, God allowed as many Jews as wanted to return to Jerusalem to do so and rebuild the Temple. What did they do after the Temple had been built and dedicated? Ezra 6:19-22.

COMMENT: Notice that each time the worship of God was restored, the keeping of His Holy Days was also resumed and emphasized. God was pleased with this national repentance because He knows that when people have the right attitude toward His Holy Days, they will learn to have the right attitude toward all His commandments, for it is on God's Holy Days that His people learn about His law.

Kept by the New Testament Church

1. Who instituted the seven annual festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Leviticus 23:1-2,Leviticus 23:6. Therefore whose feasts are they? Leviticus 23:2, last part. Are God's people to keep His feasts forever? Exodus 12:14,Exodus 12:17;Exodus 13:10.

COMMENT: God the Father is the supreme Lawgiver, but He gave His laws through His Spokesman, the One who later became Jesus Christ. As the LORD of the Old Testament, Christ delivered to ancient Israel the knowledge of God's laws, including His Sabbaths and festivals. And He made sure this knowledge would be preserved for His New Testament Church (Acts 7:38), as we learned in Lesson 23. God's early New Testament Church kept His annual festivals and Holy Days. Let's examine the proof.

2. Did Jesus, as a child, keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Luke 2:41-43.In the year Jesus was crucified, were His enemies expecting Him to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Mark 14:1.

3. More than 20 years after Jesus had been crucified and resurrected, is there clear indication that His disciples still kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Acts 20:6.Also notice the mention of these days in Acts 12:3.

COMMENT: In Acts 20:6,Paul and his companions plainly had observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread at Philippi. This Feast was still being kept by God's Church--it was not abolished at Christ's death! God would not have inspired this reference to the "days of unleavened bread" if, in His sight, His festivals had ceased to exist.

Notice what Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church says about these New Testament references to God's annual festivals and Holy Days: "Nothing could show better than these scanty notes of time how deep-rooted the custom was, how the feast was observed as regularly as the year came round. Men spoke naturally of 'the days of unleavened bread' as a significant point in the calendar.... Ordinary dates dwindle into insignificance beside these fixed, outstanding seasons....

"The question arises, as in the matter of keeping [the] Sabbath on the seventh day, whether the early Christians continued to observe these festivals.... In all probability they went on for years observing the festivals" (article "Passover," pp. 132-133).

4. Did the Apostle Paul, inspired by God, say New Testament Christians should keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.What did he say that clearly shows the Church of God at

Corinth was, at the time he wrote, keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:7. Notice the words "as ye are unleavened."

COMMENT: The Apostle Paul was telling the Corinthian church members to put out spiritual leaven, just as they had already put out all physical leaven in preparation for this festival. They were to keep the Feast not only with unleavened bread, but also with the spiritually "unleavened" attitude of righteousness, sincerity and truth. This is a direct command from God's apostle to New Testament Christians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread! Because "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," we must also keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which pictures our putting the leaven of sin out of our lives. (More about the symbolic meaning of leaven later in this lesson.) But what about Paul's statements in Colossians 2:14-17 of Colossians 2:1-23? The verses most often quoted against keeping God's festivals are, when properly understood, proof that they were being kept by the New Testament Church!

Let's understand the context of Colossians 2:1-23 and see what Paul, who kept God's Holy Days and clearly commanded the Corinthians to keep them, actually wrote to the Colossians.

5. Were the Colossian Christians Gentile by birth? Colossians 1:21;Colossians 2:13.Had they become obedient Christians? Colossians 2:5-7.

6. Exactly what did Paul tell the Colossians about observing Holy Days and Sabbaths? Colossians 2:13.

COMMENT: These Colossians were Gentile converts living in a Gentile city. They had previously known nothing of God and His Holy Days. Unless the ministers of the Church of God had taught them to observe these days, they would never have been "judged" by their pagan relatives and neighbors for doing so.

Paul did not say that Christians should not observe God's Holy Days. He merely said that they should not let anyone judge them for observing these days! Nevertheless, some have connected this reference to God's Holy Days and Sabbaths with a misinterpretation of Colossians 2:14, claiming that all of God's laws, festivals, Holy Days and Sabbaths were "nailed to the cross."

7. What actually was "nailed to the cross"? Colossians 2:14.

COMMENT: The "handwriting of ordinances" was nailed to the cross. "Handwriting" is translated from the Greek cheirographon, which means a handwritten note of debt. So what was "nailed to the cross"? A note of debt--guilt--that was incurred as a result of breaking God's law by following human ordinances and traditions, including pagan holidays.

Colossians 2:8 and Colossians 2:20-22 show which ordinances Paul was referring to: "the commandments and doctrines of men." Those were the restrictive rules and traditions of ascetic Greek philosophy, which prohibited even the moderate use of many foods and drink. It was the false religious traditions of men, not God's law, that Paul said were "contrary to us" (Colossians 2:14). The note of sinful guilt was "against us" until Christ lifted its penalty from us. His crucifixion allows us to be forgiven those sins. Christ symbolically nailed that note of sinful debt to the cross because He paid that debt for us!

What do these verses show us when we understand the context? The Christians at Colosse were being criticized by their pagan relatives and neighbors for violating their ascetic customs, which included the observance of pagan holidays. The Christians ate meat the pagans prohibited, drank what they did not allow, and observed God's weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days. (The new moons, the observation of which was then made necessary by the Jewish authorities over the calendar, determine the correct dates for God's festivals. It is not necessary to observe new moons today because the Hebrew calendar has been authoritatively fixed worldwide and published in advance.) Paul told the Colossians to ignore the criticisms, and to continue in their Christian conduct just as they had been taught by the Church (Colossians 2:7).

8. Who did Paul say has authority to "judge" Christians? Colossians 2:17,last part.

COMMENT: This part of Colossians 2:17 is not translated clearly in most English versions. The verb "is" is in italics in the King James Version, meaning that it does not appear in the original Greek text. The Greek simply reads: "...but the body of Christ." The body of Christ, as we learned in previous studies, is the Church of God (Colossians 1:18;Colossians 2:19).

Paul was declaring that no unauthorized person is to sit in judgment of a true Christian's conduct. That is the responsibility of God's Church--the "body of Christ." The Church is to teach from the Bible the proper use of food and drink, the proper time and manner of observing God's festivals and Sabbaths, and other doctrinally related matters.

Therefore the complete thought in Colossians 2:16-17 could be translated: "Let no man therefore judge you...but [rather let] the body of Christ [determine it]." Numerous Greek scholars recognize that the first expression "let no man" demands that there be a subsequent expression that tells who is to do the judging of the matter!

9. Why should we keep God's annual Sabbaths? Colossians 2:17,first part.

COMMENT: The most important reason to keep God's Holy Days is simply because God has told us to do so. That is why Herbert W. Armstrong, the late editor in chief and Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, began keeping God's annual Sabbaths.

God gives understanding to those who show they are willing to obey Him (Psalms 111:10;Acts 5:32). After seven years of obedience, God revealed to Mr. Armstrong another reason to keep His Holy Days. They "foreshadow things to come," as the phrase in Colossians 2:17 is better translated. The seventh-day Sabbath pictures or foreshadows the seventh 1,000 years, during which man shall rest from his labors of sin. In like manner, the annual festivals were instituted by God as memorials and foreshadows of events to take place in His plan. They were given to His Church in order to keep it in the knowledge of the seven major steps in His Master Plan for reproducing Himself through mankind.

Only one festival has been entirely fulfilled in type--the Passover. Yet Jesus said we are to celebrate it each year in remembrance of His sacrifice for us.

Having established this foundation for our understanding, let's see exactly how the Feast of Unleavened Bread vividly pictures the second vital step in God's great Master Plan of salvation for mankind. The Symbolic Meaning of Coming Out of Egypt The annual festivals picture events of historic and future importance to ancient Israel, the world and the Christian. Recall that when God

revealed His weekly Sabbath to the Israelites, it was a sign and a memorial so they would remember that He is the Creator and that they were His people. God also gave them the annual festivals of the Passover and Unleavened Bread as memorials to commemorate the nation's deliverance from Egypt--a picture for His Church today of the plan of God in eventually delivering the entire world from sin.

Israel's departure from Egypt has great symbolic meaning. The spiritual lesson that their deliverance from slavery teaches is vital to our complete understanding of what God intends the Feast of Unleavened Bread to picture to us today.

We learned that the Passover pictures the death of Jesus Christ--His shed blood for the remission of our sins upon real repentance. The second festival pictures our coming out of SIN as the Israelites came out of Egypt, a symbol for sin, during the seven days of the Feast. Simply stated, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures obedience to God--keeping His commandments!

Let's understand as the picture unfolds for us in the Bible.

1. Is Egypt a symbol for sin? Hebrews 11:24-27;Revelation 11:8.Are sinners the servants or slaves of sin? John 8:34;Romans 6:16.Does God want us to escape the slavery of sin by obeying Him? Romans 6:17-18,Romans 6:22.

COMMENT: The ancient Israelites were slaves in pagan Egypt. They were not allowed to obey God. Therefore the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commemorates their coming out of slavery in Egypt, also pictures their coming out of sin.

Sin enslaves! Those who are not God's Spiritbegotten children do not realize they are now the slaves of sin. Sin tends to increase in the one who indulges in it. Sin punishes! It brings sorrow, remorse and anguish. It afflicts us with physical injury, sickness and disease. It produces anxiety, frustration and hopelessness. It leads to death. Man does not realize that only real repentance--turning from sin to obedience to God through the living faith of Jesus Christ--can free him from that penalty! (Galatians 5:1). The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures, through symbols, the fact that God wants New Testament Christians (spiritual Israelites) to come completely out of the slavery of sin into obedience to Him! Just as the Israelites had to walk out of Egypt, we must willingly, of our own accord, start out of sin. Even so, it is God's goodness and mercy that leads us to this repentance from sin (Romans 2:4;John 6:65), just as He led His chosen people from Egypt to freedom.

Eternal life is clearly a gift of God (Romans 6:23), but it is also clear that God wants us to be willing and actually striving to obey Him. That is our part in His Master Plan.

Let's notice a few more parallels that will help us better understand the spiritual meaning of this festival.

2. Upon our repentance and baptism, all our past sins are blotted out by the sacrifice of Christ our Passover (Acts 2:38;Romans 3:25;1 Corinthians 5:7). When Paul asked if we, after being forgiven, should continue in sin, what did he answer? Romans 6:1-2,Romans 6:6, Romans 6:15. What was his apostolic command? Romans 6:11-13.

COMMENT: If Christians keep the Passover, yet fail to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, what they have done, symbolically, is accepted Christ's sacrifice and then continued in the slavery of sin. But Paul said Christ is not a minister of sin (Galatians 2:17). Therefore we must come out of sin--quit, sinning--by keeping God's law! The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the Christian's part in God's plan of salvation--the keeping of God's commandments, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin. Anyone who ate leavened bread or had leaven, a symbol for sin, in his home during this festival was to be put out of the nation or congregation of Israel (Exodus 12:15,Exodus 12:19). Similarly, God will not allow unrepentant sinners in His spiritual nation--the Kingdom of God! (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

3. After the ancient Israelites had begun to leave Egypt, who pursued them? Exodus 14:5-8.

COMMENT: Just as Egypt is a type of sin, Pharaoh is a type of Satan the devil! And just as Pharaoh did not want the Israelites to escape his bondage, Satan does not want sinners to escape his bondage, which is slavery to sin.

Baptized Christians are often pursued by Satan. He will set obstacles in their way in an attempt to cause them to stumble and discourage them from obeying God. The devil will do anything he can to keep God's Spirit-begotten children from receiving eternal life. The devil will try to deceive them into thinking God's way is too difficult in order to get them to quit striving to overcome--to return to the life of sin they have forsaken. As it was humanly impossible for the Israelites to escape from Pharaoh, so it is humanly impossible for Christians to overcome Satan's influence. But with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

Just as God made it possible for Israel to escape from Pharaoh's army through His miraculous power, God, through His Holy Spirit, makes His children's spiritual obedience, overcoming and growth possible. This is pictured by the third annual festival in God's Master Plan, to be thoroughly covered in Lesson 27. A Warning Not to Look Back!

1. Did Christ foretell that the modern society of our end-time generation would be much like the wicked city of Sodom? Luke 17:28-30.What is His warning for Christians living in the end time? Luke 17:31, last part. Whom should we remember in connection with His warning? Luke 17:32.

COMMENT: Christ was referring to the destruction of sinful Sodom and Gomorrah, the escape of Lot and his two daughters from Sodom, and Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt.

Tradition says that these events happened during the season of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (although they occurred several centuries before this festival was commanded by God). It is interesting to note that unleavened bread is mentioned in connection with the departure of Lot and his daughters from that sinful society (Genesis 19:3).

God had determined to destroy those two exceedingly sinful cities, which, like Egypt, are symbolic of sin (Revelation 11:8). He sent two angels to warn Lot and his family to leave the city (Genesis 19:1,Genesis 19:12-13).

2. Did everyone who was warned heed the warning? Genesis 19:14.Were Lot, his wife and their two daughters warned not to look back? Genesis 19:17. Who looked back, and as a result did not make it to safety? Genesis 19:26.

COMMENT: Lot and his family were commanded to leave--utterly forsake-- the wicked city in which they lived. Only by leaving could they avoid being destroyed with its sinful inhabitants. But Lot’s wife disobeyed. She looked back. She wanted to return to sinful Sodom. Perhaps she had grown accustomed to Sodom’s sins, and didn’t think they were all that bad.

God will not save such a person!

Salt is symbolic of something that is enduring. God turned Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt as a perpetual symbol of one who was not willing to completely and permanently forsake sin and submit to Him. Her example is a WARNING for us to leave and not return to the temporary pleasures of sin this present evil society has to offer, lest we be destroyed with it!

3. What does God say about a Christian who begins to live God’s way but later returns to the slavery of sin? Luke 9:62;2 Peter 2:20-22;Hebrews 6:4-6.

COMMENT: God s Spirit-begotten children must live in this evil world, but they must not be overcome by its sinful ways (John 17:14-15;Romans 12:2). Just like Lot, God’s people must come out of and utterly forsake the sins of this world to escape the plagues He will pour out upon the rebellious (Revelation 18:4). Those who heed the warning before it’s too late will be protected by God (Revelation 3:10;Revelation 12:14-17).

God wants those He has called and begotten to be overcoming sin--to be growing in His character by striving to put sin out of their lives through obedience to Him. He wants them to be doing their part in His Master Plan!

How Leaven Is Symbolic of Sin The departure of ancient Israel from Egypt is clearly a physical type of the Spirit-begotten Christian’s departure from sin. But why is this commemorated by seven days without leaven or leavened foods? We know that leaven itself is not harmful, for God allows it during the other 51 weeks of the year.

God prohibits the presence and use of leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread because it, like Egypt, is a symbol for sin. Let’s understand how this is revealed in the New Testament.

1. Is leaven clearly symbolic of sin? Matthew 16:6,Matthew 16:11-12; Luke 12:1;1 Corinthians 5:8.

COMMENT: Leaven is referred to in the Bible as a type of or symbol for sin. For those who have been called to Christ by the Father, putting all leaven and leavened products out of their dwellings and off their property for the seven days of this festival pictures their putting sin out of their lives. And since seven is the number God uses to denote completeness and perfection, the seven days of the Feast remind us that God wants His people to work at putting sin completely out of their lives. In writing to the Church of God at Corinth, the Apostle Paul explained the spiritual meaning and symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Gentile converts there. Let’s notice what Paul teaches New Testament Christians about leaven, and exactly why we need to become spiritually "unleavened."

2. Were the Corinthian Christians permitting a person who was actively and openly practicing sin to fellowship with God’s Church? 1 Corinthians 5:1.

3. Was this sin in their midst causing them to feel guilty, or was it rather causing them to become vain--to be "puffed up"? 1 Corinthians 5:2.

COMMENT: This sin of fornication was known to everyone in the Church of God at Corinth, but no one had done anything about the problem. By their actions, they seemed to think they could be more forgiving and therefore more righteous than God by allowing this unrepentant fornicator to remain in their fellowship.

4. Knowing that this sin was causing certain members to swell with vanity and become puffed up, Paul gave the Church specific instructions. What were those instructions? 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.

5. Did Paul compare the sinning member to a little leaven? 1 Corinthians 5:6. Again, what was his command regarding this sinner and their keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

COMMENT: Paul explained that just a small amount of leaven--one sinful person, by analogy--can cause the whole lump of dough--the whole Church, again by analogy--to become saturated with sin. Tolerance of this blatant, unrepented sin would eventually have caused other members to gradually let down and return to their former sins, thus DISQUALIFYING them from being born into God’s Kingdom! (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Moreover, the whole Church had become guilty of vanity--pride--and was just as guilty of sin as the fornicator in its midst! Paul, using his God-given authority as apostle, commanded the Corinthian church members to put out the sinful, spiritually "leavened" member so the Church would become spiritually "unleavened." By putting out the sinning member of their congregation, they put out the spiritual leaven that had begun to permeate the Church. Otherwise, sin would have spread in the lives of other Christians by the bad example of only one person, just as certainly as a little leavening in bread dough eventually causes the whole loaf to rise--to become "puffed up." This was a spiritual quarantine, so to speak, intended to prevent someone with a contagious spiritual illness from infecting others. Happily, this action helped the sinner see the seriousness of his sin. He repented, and in Paul’s next letter to the Church at Corinth, he admonished the members there to readmit the repentant man to their fellowship (2 Corinthians 2:4-10).

Paul commanded the Corinthian Christians to keep the Feast without the spiritual "leaven" of sin, just as they were already without the physical leaven of yeast (1 Corinthians 5:7). One is clearly a type of the other. They were to keep the Feast not only by eating unleavened bread, but also by having a spiritually "unleavened" attitude of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8), which is the result of obedience to God.

6. Does God want Christians to continually strive--expend effort and energy--to put the leaven of sin out of their lives? Hebrews 12:1-4.

COMMENT: If we are to become Spirit-born members of God’s Family, we must prove that we will obey God here and now by striving with all our heart, mind and strength, together with God’s help, to get the spiritual leaven of sin out of our lives and keep it out! This is our part in God’s great Master Plan. It’s a full-time job that continues for the rest of our natural lives.

Thus every spring the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread specially reminds Spirit-begotten Christians of their continual need to keep God’s commandments. It is a time when they symbolically renew their resolve to live in harmony with God’s law--to rededicate their lives to continual spiritual growth and overcoming.

Lesson 26 Part 2

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course Part 2

Lesson 26

1986

_____ FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD _____

Keeping the Feast Today

1. Are the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread annual Sabbaths or Holy Days on which God's people are to rest and assemble for worship? Exodus 12:16;Leviticus 23:6-8.

COMMENT: The Feast begins on the evening of the 15th of Abib, the beginning of the day after the Passover. It continues for seven days, ending with the 21st of Abib. Both the 15th and the 21st are special Sabbaths--annual "holy convocations"--days of rest from regular work, though cooking is permitted (Exodus 12:16). Ordinary work may be done on the intervening days, except on any intervening weekly Sabbath. A "holy convocation" is a commanded religious assembly--commanded by God Almighty Himself. Today, members of God's Church assemble on the annual Sabbaths much as they do on the weekly Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3). Those few who live too far away from other members to attend weekly Sabbath services are often able to meet with God's Spirit-begotten children on these annual Sabbaths. God's ministers use these opportunities to explain more about the meaning of God's festivals and His Master Plan.

2. What special observance did God institute on the evening of the first day of the Feast? Exodus 12:42.

COMMENT: Every year on the evening of the 15th of Abib, the evening after Passover, the Israelites were to have a special observance in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. Today, true Christians (spiritual Israelites) also celebrate the "Night to Be Much Observed" on the anniversary of Israel's deliverance from slavery.

Gathering in small family groups for an evening meal, God's people give thanks to Him for having called them out of the slavery of sin into His Church. They rejoice in the fact that God has revealed to them His law, His Holy Days and their meaning. Then on the daylight part of the 15th, they assemble with the rest of their local congregations to be instructed by God's ministers.

3. Is all leaven and leavened food to be removed from our homes and property, and kept out during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Exodus 12:19-20;Exodus 13:7.

COMMENT: Leaven is any substance used to cause dough to rise by fermentation. Yeast, bicarbonate of soda (baking soda), baking powder and sourdough are leavening agents. Leavened foods include most breads, crackers, cakes, cookies, biscuits, pastries and some pies and prepared cereals. A few candies and other foods are also leavened. If one is in doubt about any product, he should check the list of ingredients on its package. If still not sure about a

particular food, it should not be eaten during the Feast (Romans 14:23).

All leaven and leavened foods should be removed from one’s premises before the beginning of the first Holy Day. They should not be stored in another room. The morning after the New Testament Passover service, which is still the Passover day, is a convenient time to finish removing any leavening agents or leavened bread. It is wise to arrange purchases so that when Passover comes, there will be little leaven to discard. Removing these inexpensive products is one way God tests us to see how much we value obedience to Him.

If during the Feast some accidentally overlooked leaven is found in the home, it should be thrown away immediately. This is a good lesson for us as it is a type of the hidden sins we aren’t aware of at baptism. As we grow in spiritual knowledge and understanding, we become aware of more sins to overcome. We must immediately put the leaven of sin out of our lives when it is discovered!

Unleavened bread can be made at home or bought in stores (it is often called "matzos," which comes from the Hebrew word matstsah, which means unleavened), but one should check the label to make sure it is unleavened. We may also enjoy unleavened cereals and desserts, together with all the meats, drinks, fruits and vegetables we normally eat. Many unleavened products are delicious as well as nutritious and can be enjoyed year-round.

It should be noted that "brewer’s yeast" and "yeast extracts" are not active, and therefore are not leavening agents. Cream of tartar, by itself, is not a leavening agent either. Beaten egg white used in meringue on pies and other desserts is not a leavening agent, but when used as a substitute for leavening to puff up any flour or meal product, it violates the spirit of God’s command. But what about beer or other fermented drinks? There is no restriction on the kind of beverages consumed during the Feast of Unleavened Bread--no mention in the Bible of this being the "Feast of Unleavened Beverages." Naturally fermented wine was customarily consumed by the Israelites at all of God’s festivals, except, of course, the Day of Atonement. The Bible does not refer to leaven in connection with beverages. Reference is made only to the example set by the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt without any leaven in their dough (Exodus 12:39).

Difficulties sometimes arise when family members disagree with the observance of God’s festivals. In this age in which God is calling only a few, one should never try to force his will on others! This festival is a matter between you and God. The family member who does want to keep God’s Feast of Unleavened Bread should avoid eating leavened products and do his or her best to remove leavening from those areas of the house he or she has authority over, which may be only a bedroom.

4. Does God command His people to eat unleavened bread during this festival? Exodus 13:7;Leviticus 23:6.

COMMENT: God’s people do not merely remove all leaven and leavened foods from their property during these seven days. That would symbolize only the putting away of sin. We are commanded to eat unleavened bread during this festival. That symbolizes righteousness--active obedience to God!

Whenever bread and other flour products are eaten during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they must be unleavened. This requires alertness, and attention to detail, especially in restaurants, for

the use of leaven is very common. Sin is also very common, and forgetfulness of God’s law will lead to sin in our lives.

God’s people should always keep firmly in mind the vital lesson taught by this annual festival: God wants His Spirit-begotten children to live righteously, keeping His perfect spiritual law, forsaking the spiritual leaven of sin!

Saved by the LIVING Christ The seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread following Passover picture the putting away of sin--the keeping of God’s law--after past sins are forgiven. This festival of God also pictures the life and work of the resurrected Christ, who ascended to the throne of God, where He is now actively working on our behalf as our High Priest, helping us put the leaven of sin out of our lives. Understanding this vital aspect of the Feast is crucial to our developing the character of God and being born into His universe-ruling Family at Christ’s Second Coming.

1. What did Christ’s death make possible for us? Romans 5:10,first part. But does His death save us? Same verse, last seven words.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ’s death does not save us--it merely reconciles us to God. Those so reconciled are no longer cut off from God. Through acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice they have been restored to contact with God the Father--the One who can give us eternal life.

Passover pictures the crucified--the dead--Christ. But Christ is not a dead Savior. He rose from the dead. He is our living Savior! Notice how this fact is also pictured in the symbolism of baptism.

2. Is baptism symbolic of Christ’s death and resurrection? Romans 6:3-4.In the context of baptism, are we saved through Christ’s death, or through His resurrection? 1 Peter 3:21-22.

COMMENT: If Christ had not been raised from the dead, we would still be in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). That could be symbolized by being immersed in water and never coming back up--symbolically drowning in our sins! But coming up out of the water of baptism is symbolic of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Clearly, we can be saved only by Christ’s life.

Part of God’s instructions to ancient Israel for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread included the ceremony of the "firstfruits wavesheaf offering" (Leviticus 23:9-11,Leviticus 23:14). God told the Israelites that the spring grain harvest could not begin until this offering was made. But God does not require this offering today. The Bible reveals that its symbolism was fulfilled by the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Jesus Christ was the first resurrected Son of God--the first harvested product of God’s Master Plan. He became the "firstborn" Son of God (Colossians 1:18)--the first human to be born into God’s divine Family. (The complete meaning of the wavesheaf offering relates also to the third annual festival and will be explained thoroughly in the following lesson.)

It is fitting that Christ, who was completely without sin, was resurrected and born of God during the festival that pictures the absence of sin. Therefore the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in addition to picturing the putting of sin out of our lives, also, through the symbolism of the firstfruits wave offering, pictures the resurrected living Christ, for it is the living Christ who gives us the spiritual power we need to be able to overcome sin! We must understand.

3. Do Christians still sin occasionally after having accepted Christ's sacrifice in payment for their past sins? 1 John 1:8.(Notice that John included himself by using the word "we.")

COMMENT: We are still flesh and blood beings. We can still be tempted. Satan can still broadcast his attitudes of sin to our minds and influence us to break God's commandments.

4. How can Christians be forgiven the sins they commit after baptism? 1 John 1:9;1 John 2:1-2.In what other ways does the living Christ now help God's Spirit-begotten children? Romans 8:34;Hebrews 7:25-26;Hebrews 4:14-16.

COMMENT: Christ, our ever-living High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor, acts as a "bridge" between imperfect humans and our perfect Father in heaven. Our High Priest can sympathize with our weaknesses because He, as the human Jesus, was tempted just as we are, yet He overcame and promises to help us overcome, too (John 16:33;Php 4:13). Therefore, through our High Priest, we can come boldly to God's throne and find grace, mercy, forgiveness and the help we need to continue putting sin out of our lives.

5. Does Christ give us permission to pray directly to the Father, using Christ's name in making those requests? John 15:16.Does Christ, acting as God's administrative assistant, also answer those prayers? John 14:13-14.

6. Does Christ, through the Holy Spirit, live in God's Spirit-begotten children? Galatians 2:20;Romans 8:9-10;Colossians 1:27;Php 2:5;1 John 3:23-24.Must Christians not only have God's Spirit, but also be led by it so their thoughts may become more like Christ's and the Father's? Romans 8:14;2 Corinthians 10:5.

COMMENT: The true Christian's hope of glory--the hope of attaining membership in God's glorious Family--is in Christ, our Savior, living in us through the Holy Spirit! Christ is not only the Author or Beginner of our salvation, but He is also its Finisher--He is the One who completes our salvation (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus Christ told His disciples He had to go to His Father's throne in heaven to send God's Spirit to them (John 16:7). They received the Spirit through the resurrected, glorified, living Christ. As we learned in a previous lesson, the Spirit of the Father is also the Spirit of Christ. Thus it was Christ entering them--not in person, but in spirit. Christ is a living Savior, who does His saving work from within!

God's Spirit also imparts to us His love, which enables us to fulfill His law (Romans 5:5;Romans 13:10). It's not just us, through our own strength, striving to keep God's commandments. It is the living Christ in us, in spirit, keeping His Father's commandments by divine love, just as He did when He was the human Jesus.

We know we cannot obey God on our own power and strength. But CHRIST IN US CAN! Our living Savior gives us the POWER to become righteous--to become spiritually unleavened! Through that power we are being prepared for our spiritual harvest into the universe-ruling Family of God! The Next Step in God's Master Plan

God's law is a spiritual law (Romans 7:14). Consequently we must have God's Holy Spirit to fully understand and keep it (1 Corinthians 2:11). God's Spirit imparts to us the love of God and the

faith of Christ. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that God’s holy, righteous character can be built in us. And it is only by God’s power that we will be born of God, if we have first been begotten by His Spirit. God’s Spirit is a vital part of God’s Master Plan of salvation.

It is also through the Holy Spirit that God places us into His Church-- His Spirit-begotten Family--His Kingdom in embryo. God is not working through isolated individuals, nor through the many religions of this world. He is working through an organized, unified body of thousands of true Christians whom He has called out of the world. God’s Church is also a vital part of His plan of salvation. In our next lesson, we’ll learn how God’s Church began and how His Spirit empowers His Church, enabling it to perform the tremendous commission God has given His people to do. We’ll learn how God is now using His Church to prepare this world for Christ’s return.

We’ll also learn how God is now preparing those whom He has put into His Church, readying them for spiritual "harvesting" into His soon-coming Kingdom--for being born as the "firstfruits" of His divine Family to become the rulers and teachers in the wonderful world tomorrow!

All this is pictured by the third annual festival in God’s Master Plan, the "Feast of Firstfruits," known in the New Testament as the day of Pentecost.

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. God ordained that His people observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread to A. stress that they have their part in God’s plan by putting sin out of their lives.

B. remind them they must repent and strive to put sin completely out of their lives.

C. picture keeping His commandments.

D. All of the above.

2. When Paul wrote "let us keep the feast," he A. was clearly referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

B. meant the feast known today as Easter.

C. was writing to Jewish Christians only.

D. meant the Passover, not the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

3. How did the ancient Israelites learn about the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

A. It had been an annual occasion from the time of Abraham; perhaps even earlier.

B. God, through Moses, commanded this festival shortly before they left Egypt.

C. The Israelite elders created the festival as a national holiday to give the people national identity.

D. It was an agricultural festival celebrated by everyone in Egypt.

4. When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, He A. led them by the quickest possible route to the Promised Land.

B. caused their flight to be so rapid that the Egyptians gave up pursuing them.

C. abandoned them in the desert and let them fend for themselves.

D. purposely led them into a trap from which He supernaturally delivered them.

5. According to Church tradition and the plain intent of Scripture, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea A. where it was only a shallow marsh.

B. by borrowing ships of the Egyptian navy.

C. on the seventh day of the first Feast of Unleavened Bread.

D. on the Feast of Firstfruits.

6. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. The ancient Israelites kept God’s festivals faithfully from the time of Moses until Christ.

B. The ancient Israelites fell into idolatry many times.

C. God’s Temple sometimes fell into disuse and disrepair.

D. King Hezekiah realized that Judah’s national troubles were the result of the nation having forsaken God.

7. When King Hezekiah and King Josiah restored the true worship of God to Israel, they A. said the Holy Days were for Jews only.

B. restored the keeping of God’s Holy Days.

C. told the people God’s laws would soon be done away.

D. preached that salvation is by faith only.

8. The seven annual festivals A. were instituted by the Most High God and given through His Spokesman to His people.

B. are "feasts of the Lord."

C. were commanded to be kept forever.

D. All of the above.

9. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Christians today do not need to follow the example set by Christ and His apostles.

B. Jesus kept the Feast of Unleavened Breed.

C. The Apostle Paul commanded Gentile converts to keep the Feast.

D. The early true Church kept the Feast.

10. Paul told the Colossians to A. quit observing the Sabbath and the Holy Days.

B. ignore outsiders' criticisms--whether from Gentiles or Jews--of their newfound Christian conduct.

C. allow their pagan neighbors to sit in judgment of their observance of God's Holy Days.

D. observe all the sacrifices and rituals of the law of Moses that were associated with the Sabbaths and Holy Days.

11. What was figuratively nailed to Jesus' cross A. God's commandments.

B. The seven annual festivals.

C. The debt we incurred by following the commandments and doctrines of men.

D. All of the above.

12. Christians today should observe God's seven annual festivals and Holy Days because.

A. God has told us to do so.

B. they foreshadow good things to come.

C. they picture the seven major steps in God's Master Plan for offering salvation to all mankind.

D. All of the above.

13. In Egypt the ancient Israelites were slaves and were not allowed to obey God. This symbolically pictures that A. sinners are the servants or slaves of sin.

B. God no longer commands people to quit sinning.

C. God's laws are not relevant to our modern society.

D. Christ's Passover sacrifice guarantees our salvation and consequently we do not have to obey God.

14. Just as God required the Israelites to walk out of Egypt. Christians today A. must leave their ungodly neighbors and form separate Christian communities.

B. should walk as the only healthy form of exercise.

C. must willingly start out of sin by obeying God.

D. should believe that Christ has obeyed God for them.

15. When Paul asked if we, after being forgiven, should continue in sin, what did he answer?

A. Faith in Christ had made God's spiritual law null and void (Romans 3:31).

B. Sin is no longer a relevant issue in the New Testament era of grace (Romans 6:15).

C. Sins committed after baptism will keep a person out of God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

D. Christians must not be enslaved to sin (Romans 6:6,12).

16. After Christians begin to obey God, Satan A. is pleased because they have abandoned faith in God's grace.

B. will attempt to discourage them, to get them to quit their newfound faith.

C. can no longer deceive them on any point of doctrine.

D. has no more power over them because they now perceive him as merely an abstract personification of evil.

17. Christians today should remember Lot's wife because A. modern society is nothing like ancient Sodom's.

B. the fate of unrepentant sinners is to be perpetual pillars of salt.

C. she is an example of one who did not really want to forsake sin and its environment completely.

D. she is the best biblical example of complete conversion.

18. God prohibits leaven and leavened breads A. during the Feast of Unleavened Bread because leaven puffs up and spreads and, during that week, symbolizes sin.

B. because they cause health problems.

C. only for the Jews.

D. during the Lenten season before Easter.

19. When Paul learned that the Corinthian Christians were permitting an unrepentant person to fellowship with them, he told them A. that their good example would eventually convert the man.

B. to put him out of their fellowship because his example would eventually spread to other members in the Church.

C. that the man's sin was not serious.

D. a little spiritual leaven would not spread throughout the whole Church.

20. God wants His people to put the leaven of sin out of their lives A. only so long as it is convenient.

B. only during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

C. with all their heart, mind and , together with God's help.

D. by deciding their own moral standards.

21. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is A. usually a convenient time to finish removing leaven from the house.

B. a holy convocation, a God-ordained religious assembly and Sabbath.

C. the same day as the Passover.

D. All of the above.

22. On the evening of the 15th of Abib, true Christians A. gather in small family groups for the "Night to Be Much Observed."

B. observe the New Testament Passover service.

C. rejoice at having been freed from slavery to God’s laws.

D. remain awake all night in memory of the death angel passing over the Israelites’ firstborn.

23. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. If a Christian finds some leaven in his home during the Feast, he should discard it immediately.

B. Even during the Feast, it is all right to eat leavened bread in a restaurant because we have no control over the chef.

C. Christians should eat unleavened bread during this festival to symbolize righteousness.

D. God allows us to drink wine in moderation during the Feast.

24. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an ancient ceremony was performed that pictures the resurrected Messiah or Christ A. through the symbolism of a wave offering of the first of the firstfruits.

B. who gives us the spiritual power to overcome sin and become righteous.

C. who ascended to His Father’s throne on the First day of the week during this festival.

D. All of the above.

25. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Christ, our High Priest, intercedes for us.

B. Christ lived a righteous life so we wouldn’t need to.

C. We can pray to the Father in Jesus’ name.

D. Christ lives His life in Spirit-begotten Christians and helps them overcome every type of temptation.

Lesson 27

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 27

1986

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PENTECOST _____ Only "Firstfruits" Now Called!

God is not trying to convert the world now--believe it or not! Now is the time God is calling to salvation only a tiny minority--the firsttruits of salvation. Why?

Nearly 5,000,000,000 human beings are alive today. Of this incredibly large number, God has called and put into His Church in the last 50 years little more than 100,000. For every person God has put into His Church, there are 50,000 people He has not!

Why?

There is an astounding reason! This vast majority, your Bible reveals, will be called later--most not until after Christ's return. These thousands of millions cannot come to Christ and become part of God's Church now--even if they try! Jesus said so, plainly, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Comparatively speaking, God has been drawing only a few in this age, but for a great purpose.

Why has God called the few He has? For what purpose has God drawn and put into His Church His firstfruits? Has God drawn these few and put them into His Church, as some think, just so they can get salvation and enjoy the fellowship and social life of the local congregations? Where We Are Now in God's Plan God has a Master Plan pictured by seven annual festivals. The first festival is Passover. It pictures the Messiah--Christ--who volunteered before the foundation of the world to be slain as the Passover Lamb, the Savior of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20;Revelation 13:8). That was accomplished in the spring of A.D. 31. The second festival, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, pictures overcoming sin. The first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and sin entered the world. God then sentenced the human family to 6,000 years of spiritual exile, during which the human family is, as a whole, cut off from the possibility of salvation (except for those few He would choose for a special purpose).

We are now near the end of the first 6,000 years, during which humans have experimented with every imaginable form of government, religion, social and economic idea. Soon the fourth step in God's plan will occur-- the return of Jesus Christ to restore the government of God on earth. This event is pictured by the fourth Holy Day, the Feast of Trumpets. It is after that event that the vast majority will be called to salvation in a world ruled and guided by God's Family. But before the vast majority can live in such a world and be taught the true way to salvation, rulers and teachers must be trained. That is where we who are the firstfruits of salvation in God's plan enter the picture!

Church in God’s Master Plan

We are now in the age of the Church. God is not working through isolated prophets, nor through independent Christians. He is working through a small group of tens of thousands of Spirit-begotten humans, organized and unified by His laws, His government, His truth.

God’s Church is the means by which God is now preparing this world for Christ’s return! It is through God’s Church that He is preparing the future rulers and teachers of His Kingdom. God has laid the foundation; He is now beginning to build the world tomorrow through His Church today!

Those now called into God’s Church are part of God’s spiritual firstiruits--the first group to be offered salvation. Those now in God’s Church have been called first--for the special PURPOSE of being prepared for God’s Kingdom!

Once the Church is prepared and ready, God’s firstfruits will become Christ’s ruling and teaching assistants, helping teach the true way to salvation to everyone in the world tomorrow. They have been called for the special service of preparing to eventually help bring the knowledge of salvation to the vast majority! The firstfruits of salvation are pictured by God’s third annual festival--the Feast of Firstfruits, which is called Pentecost in the New Testament. Let’s look, now, at what traditional Christianity has no knowledge of--what the Bible reveals about the Feast of Firstfruits, God’s Church and the third major step in God’s Master Plan for the salvation of all mankind.

LESSON 27 New Testament Church Began on Day of Pentecost

Jesus told His disciples shortly before His trial and crucifixion: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). Christ would continue to teach and support the apostles, but not in person, for He ascended to heaven. So how would He come to them?--by means of the Holy Spirit.

1. Did Jesus promise His disciples they would receive power from heaven? Luke 24:49.Where did He tell them to wait for this power? Same verse Luke 1:4-5,Luke 1:8.

2. In what miraculous way did God’s Spirit come to Christ’s disciples? Acts 2:1-6.What was the name of the day on which this great display occurred? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: The day of Pentecost is the third annual festival given to ancient Israel. Its Old Testament name was Feast of Firstfruits, since it came at the end of the first or spring harvest in the Northern Hemisphere (Exodus 23:16;Exodus 34:22;Numbers 28:26). It was also called the Feast of Weeks, since it came seven weeks after the first Sunday after Passover (Deuteronomy 16:9-10,Deuteronomy 16:16). Since it was also the fiftieth day of the spring harvest season, Greekspeaking Jews and Christians called it pentekoste, which means "fiftieth."

Pentecost A.D. 31 marked the beginning of God’s Spirit-begotten New Testament Church. Ekklesia, the Greek word for "church," means an assembly of "called-out ones." The whole world is not "called out"--only a tiny minority are predestined to be called for a special purpose. This is pictured by and commemorated by the annual festival of Pentecost.

World Cut Off from Holy Spirit

Why does God call people to salvation? Why is God calling only a few before He calls the vast majority? Once a person is called and put into God's Church, what does he or she DO?

1. As the first step in reproducing Himself, God created Adam and Eve and gave them basic instructions in the right way to live. Did God offer Adam and Eve an opportunity to receive His Spirit? Genesis 2:8-9,Genesis 2:16-17.

COMMENT: Adam had mortal life. The tree of life represented eternal life, which can come only from God's Spirit. If Adam had eaten of that tree, he would have received God's Spirit, been begotten as a son of God. Adam, conditionally, would have received the earnest or down payment of eternal life. God's Spirit would have enabled Adam and Eve to overcome temptation, grow in righteous character and become perfect, eventually, ready to be given spirit-composed eternal life, unconditionally. Even Jesus had to grow, learn, overcome and become perfect (Luke 2:40;Hebrews 5:8;Revelation 3:21;Hebrews 2:10).

2. Adam and Eve, however, did not eat of the tree of life. From which tree did they choose to eat? Genesis 3:1-6.

COMMENT: Though God had warned them of the penalty of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve was persuaded by the devil's clever arguments to eat of the fruit that led to self-centeredness and death! Adam also willingly ate the forbidden fruit.

Whether Adam fully realized it or not, he thus lost his opportunity to conquer Satan and replace him as ruler of this world. Instead, Adam obeyed Satan, placing himself under Satan's government.

3. What was Adam and Eve's punishment for disobeying God? Genesis 3:16-19.Were they denied further access to the tree of life and therefore cut off from God's Spirit? Genesis 3:22-24.

COMMENT: After Adam disobeyed, God cut off all humanity from access to His Spirit and thus cut them off from salvation! Until a son of Adam--the Son of Man--could qualify where Adam failed, could conquer Satan, pay the penalty of human sin and ransom the world from its kidnapper, no one could restore God's government on earth, and no one could be given salvation. The Messiah, and He alone, could do all this. Of necessity, then, God's plan required that mankind in general be not yet judged. God has therefore not permitted them to have access to His Spirit, nor access to salvation. They will have their opportunity for salvation in a special resurrection to judgment, which will be after God's government has been restored over the entire earth.

God Now Calling Only a Few The one great purpose now uppermost in God's mind is the restoration of His government on earth. God set apart a period of 7,000 years in which to accomplish His purpose. The first 6,000 years He sentenced mankind to be cut off from salvation. For His supreme purpose, God has called a few. Hebrews 11:1-40 mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others. Apparently each was called for a special mission preparatory to the salvation of humanity. In order for them to perform their mission, it was necessary that an exception be made and they be empowered by God's Spirit. The work done by the patriarchs and prophets became the foundation on which the Church was built (Ephesians 2:20). And the Church, in turn, is the instrument God is using to eventually bring about His Kingdom and the restoration of His government over the entire earth.

Even ancient Israel, as a whole, was never offered God's Spirit. They were given God's laws, but, as a nation, they were purposely denied access to God's Spirit. God gave proof, through Israel, that without His Spirit, humanity is helpless. The ancient nation of Israel knew about God and could appeal to Him, but without His Spirit in them, the Israelites could not have the love of God in them and they consequently could not be spiritually righteous.

Nevertheless, after the nation of Israel became two people, the separate nations of Israel and Judah were used by God to further His plan. God caused the nation of Judah to preserve the knowledge of His law and His Word even though they did not have a spiritual understanding of it. Into this nation Jesus Christ was born. When Jesus Christ came to earth nearly 2,000 years ago, it was not to set up His Kingdom (John 18:36). Christ did not, at that time, come to restrain Satan from deceiving the world. Let's understand why.

1. Did Jesus speak in parables to make His meaning clear, or to hide His meaning from the general public? Matthew 13:10-15,Matthew 13:34; Mark 4:11-12.Was this because the time had not yet come for most to be forgiven their sins and be converted? Mark 4:12.

COMMENT: Christ preached the Father's Gospel to the public as a witness. They heard it but did not comprehend it. The only ones Jesus really wanted to understand the truth were a few specially called and chosen students.

2. Can everyone who wants to come to Christ receive God's Spirit and thereby become a member of His Church? John 6:44,John 6:65.

COMMENT: In this age before Christ begins to rule over the whole earth, each person is specially chosen. Like the prophets before them, these firstfruits are called for a special mission--a purpose preparatory to the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth and the salvation of the majority! Otherwise, no exceptions can be made--the world as a whole must remain cut off from access to salvation until Christ returns. That is why God's Church does not try to convert anyone. Only God can do that. God's ministers do not beg or plead with anyone to repent or be baptized or support God's Church. But they do make God's way easy to understand for those whom God is calling.

If God wanted everyone to understand, everyone would. Instead, hardly anyone does. God's "hands off" policy that began in the Garden of Eden will continue until just before Christ's return.

3. After Christ's resurrection, how many disciples were there? Acts 1:15.Were they given God's Spirit, thus making them the first members of God's Church? Acts 2:1-4;1 Corinthians 12:13.

COMMENT: Out of the thousands who had heard Christ, about 120 believed Him. Those 120 had been taught by Jesus. The 3,000 who were begotten of God later that day (Acts 2:41)were from various parts of the world (Acts 2:5, Acts 2:8-11); they had not, as a whole, been taught by Christ. They were now being taught by the apostles, who had been trained and commissioned to teach (Matthew 28:19-20). The number of Christians continued to grow and may have increased to about 100,000. But then persecution began, just as Jesus had prophesied (John 15:20). Persecution first came from the Jews, then later the Romans and false brethren (Acts 20:29-30;3 John 1:9-10). It was some decades later that these false brethren outnumbered the true.

Most congregations were eventually taken over by men who attempted to combine Christ's teachings with traditional customs, compromising the truth by attaching Christian-sounding names

to pagan ideas. Satan, the god of this world, was deceiving many with a counterfeit, falsely labeled Christianity.

True Christians remained a small minority--probably never more than about 100,000--fleeing to new areas when persecution became too intense.

Why does God have this small flock? What is its purpose?

Church: Preparing for Kingdom of God

God created man incomplete--needing finishing touches. Man was given a human spirit, needing God’s Spirit. He was made mortal, needing to be given immortality. He was created a free moral agent, needing to develop character.

Just as God does not create all at once, but in successive stages, so He is bringing salvation to mankind in successive stages. Every stage is a progressive step toward the goal of establishing His Kingdom and restoring His government on earth.

1. Did Malachi prophesy that God would send a messenger to prepare the way before the Lord? Malachi 3:1.Was this prophecy in part fulfilled by John the Baptist, who came before the Lord’s First Coming? Luke 7:24,Luke 7:27. Did John prepare the way by making a people ready for Christ? Luke 1:17.

COMMENT: John preached repentance--obedience to God’s law--to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous. Thus when Jesus began preaching, some people were ready to listen. Many of John’s disciples later became Jesus’ disciples.

2. Did Christ tell His disciples that John’s work in the spirit and power of Elijah was a prototype of another "Elijah" yet to come? Matthew 17:11-13.(Notice Jesus said he "shall"--yet future--come.) Did Malachi prophesy that this "Elijah"--God’s messenger--would come before the day of the Lord--when Christ comes in power to punish the disobedient and rule in righteousness? Malachi 3:1-2,Malachi 3:5;Malachi 4:5-6.

COMMENT: John was a prototype of a messenger God would send in the spirit and power of Elijah before Christ’s Second Coming. A people would be prepared for Christ through a message about the return of Christ, the establishment of God’s Kingdom and the need for people to repent.

3. In what way is God’s Church now preparing for the end of Satan’s world and the ushering in of God’s Kingdom? Matthew 24:3,Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10.

COMMENT: From these verses, it is clear that the true Gospel was not preached to the world for some 1,900 years, for the end is not yet here. The true Gospel was suppressed, and, according to this prophecy of Jesus Christ, the "gospel" preached to the world was another gospel, a counterfeit!

God’s Church, by preaching Christ’s Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness, is preparing millions for Christ’s return. Although most people pay little attention to the message now, they will remember it when Christ and the saints begin to rule and Satan the deceiver has been restrained. Many who do not believe the message now will nevertheless have been prepared to believe when taught by Christ and His assistants.

God’s Church is also preparing for God’s Kingdom in another way. Those who believe Christ’s Gospel now are being prepared for a special role as part of God’s soon-coming Kingdom. Malachi 3:1 says the Lord will come to His Temple. Let’s notice what this means.

4. What is the spiritual Temple Christ will return to at His Second Coming? 1 Corinthians 3:16-17;1 Corinthians 6:19;2 Corinthians 6:16;Ephesians 2:19-21.

COMMENT: God’s Church, composed of those who have God’s Spirit within them, is the spiritual Temple to which Christ will come. Paul told the Ephesians that the Church must be "fitly framed together," growing, "builded together." This united growth can be achieved only through God’s government.

5. Has God also chosen ministers within His Church and assigned them the responsibility of teaching the members, giving them spiritual nourishment? 1 Corinthians 1:10;1 Peter 5:1-3;Ephesians 4:11-13.

COMMENT: The members of God’s Church do not establish their own doctrines. If they did, confusion would result, for each member is at a different level of growth in knowledge and character. God’s Church is organized, speaking the same thing, unified through the authority God has placed in His ministers. The doctrines of God’s Church come from God through Jesus Christ through His Word and His inspiration in the men He has chosen to direct His Church. The Pastor General and his staff teach the local pastors, and they, in unity, teach the members of God’s Church around the world.

Let it be emphasized that the Church’s purpose is not merely to give salvation to Church members--the purpose is to teach and train them to become the instruments God will use to save the vast majority.

Church Members Preparing for God’s Kingdom

1. Did Paul understand that the people of Israel were spiritually blinded? Romans 10:16-18,Romans 10:21. (Although they heard the true Gospel, they did not obey it.) Did God purposely allow their blindness? Romans 11:8,Romans 11:25, Romans 11:32.

2. Nevertheless, did Paul know that the Israelites would have a future opportunity to receive salvation? Romans 11:26.Did God purposely blind the majority of Israelites so they could obtain mercy later--through the mercy of those who were called first? Romans 11:31.

COMMENT: Romans 11:26, which quotes Isaiah 59:20,explains when most Israelites will have their opportunity for salvation--after a Deliverer (Isaiah says "Redeemer") comes out of Zion to call them to repent of ungodliness. The Redeemer from Zion is Jesus Christ, but Paul was not referring to His First Coming, for Israel was still blinded at the time Paul wrote this.

All Israel shall be saved when the Deliverer returns with power and glory to rule. And then, wrote Paul, the Israelites shall receive their opportunity for salvation through the mercy of the first-century Christians and those who would be called into God’s Church through the centuries. When Christ returns, all true Christians will be resurrected and/or changed to immortality to help Him rule and teach the way of salvation to both Israelites and Gentiles.

3. Will many nations go to Jerusalem--the headquarters of Christ's government--and ask to be taught His way? Micah 4:2.Will the earth become full of the knowledge of the Lord? Isaiah 11:9.

4. In addition to being rulers, will the Spiritborn children of God also be priests? Revelation 1:6;Revelation 5:10;Revelation 20:6.What is the function of a priest? Malachi 2:7;Ezekiel 44:23.

COMMENT: Just as ancient Israel's priests were assigned to teach God's laws, Spirit-born members of God's Family will be teachers of God's way of life, helping bring the knowledge of the way to salvation to everyone.

Salvation for all mankind in the world tomorrow will come through the life and work of Christ and the Spirit-born saints. In a sense, then, they, as priests, will be co-saviors with Christ. Is God unfair to give these positions of leadership to only the few He has specially chosen? Not at all. God has not called anyone for special favors--He has called them for a special purpose--a tremendous job to do. God rewards us according to our works (Matthew 16:27). Those called now have to overcome Satan and his society. That requires effort, self-denial and willpower, a price most humans are not willing to pay.

Before Jesus could qualify to rule, He had to overcome Satan while Satan was ruling. Since the Church will rule with and under Christ, Church members must also qualify by resisting and overcoming Satan while he is still ruling (Revelation 3:21). That will not be required of the overwhelming majority. God will call them to salvation when the world is ruled by Christ and the saints--when it will undoubtedly be easier to live God's way. It will be easier because of the advance work now being done by God's firstfruits. In order to qualify for their future jobs, those whom God has called into His Church have been freely given God's Spirit and the opportunity for salvation. The rulers and teachers of God's Kingdom are, by necessity, given opportunity for salvation before their future students can be. The Church is a necessary instrumentality preparatory to bringing salvation to all humanity! The only reason any person is called to salvation in this age is to qualify to help in ruling and teaching in the world tomorrow--to help call and save those alive then.

God's Spirit Empowers Church

God has given His people a job to do, and He gives them the power to be able to do it. God's Church could not preach the Gospel to the world as it is being done today without God's Spirit! Nor can God's people prepare for their future leadership roles without this divine power.

1. Could Jesus do any spiritual works, including obedience to God, with just His human strength? John 5:30;John 8:28.Where did He get the necessary power? John 14:10,last part.

COMMENT: The Father "dwelt" in Jesus through the Holy Spirit!

2. Did Christ promise the same spiritual help to His disciples? John 14:16.What is the "Comforter"? John 14:26. Does Christ, through the Holy Spirit, live in His followers today? Romans 8:9-10;Colossians 1:27;1 John 3:24.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ went to the Father's throne in heaven to send God's Spirit to His disciples (John 16:7). Through God's Spirit, Christ lived in them--not in person, but in spirit. True Christians' hope of glory--our hope of becoming part of God's glorious Family--is in Christ, our

Savior, living in us through the Holy Spirit.

3. Is it necessary to obey God to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:32.Did Jesus obey God, and does He expect Christians to obey Him today? John 15:10.Are Christ's commandments exactly the same as His Father's? John 14:24.

4. Must Christians not only have God's Spirit, but also be yielded to it, letting it transform them so they become more like Christ and the Father? Romans 6:13;Romans 8:14;Php 2:5;2 Corinthians 10:5.

COMMENT: God's Holy Spirit gives His Spirit-begotten children supernatural power to help them live the way today that Jesus Christ lived more than 1,900 years ago. Through that Spirit, Christ is enabling them to obey God, overcome sin and endure to the end of this age. God's Spirit is the power by which God's firstfruits are now being prepared for their jobs in God's Kingdom.

God's Spirit is also the power by which God's Church accomplishes its commission to preach Christ's Gospel to the world.

5. By what power was the work of God done during the days of God's servant Zerubbabel, who built the physical Temple (later refurbished) to which Jesus came? Zechariah 4:6.What power was given to Jesus' disciples to enable them to perform their commission? Acts 1:8.Was this also the power by which Paul was able to preach Christ's Gospel? Romans 15:19.

COMMENT: The work of God's Church is ultimately done by the power of the Spirit of God! The Kingdom of God is being preached and published in all the world today by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The "fruits" God is producing through His human instruments today are the same fruits His Spirit produced through the human Jesus and the collective "Body of Christ" in apostolic days!

6. Did Christ say His servants would do even greater works than He had done while on earth? John 14:12.What work would the Church do in preparation for the end of this age and the return of Christ? Matthew 24:14;Mark 13:10.

COMMENT: Right now, the divine commission to publicize the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness to all nations is being fulfilled in a dramatic way. God's Church today is reaching far more people than Jesus was ever able to reach on foot. With today's modern technology, God's Church can reach millions of people via television, radio, satellites, the printing press and other means of mass communication!

These facilities enable the Church to do a tremendously greater work than the first-century apostles could. These facilities, however, also cost more money. Without the tithes and offerings of the members, the Church's commission could not be fulfilled!

God could send angels to preach His Gospel. Instead, He is using humans because by supporting the work, they are being trained! And they cannot be trained without their participation and support!

It would be easy for God to supply money miraculously. Instead, He uses humans to provide that support. Tithes and offerings don't enrich God any. He has commanded His people to support His Church for their own good. They grow in spiritual character, they become better prepared to rule,

partly through their support--whether financial contributions, labor, encouragement or prayer--of the work being done!

Every Christian who is growing spiritually has his heart completely in the work God has given His Church to accomplish. Our "works" include our part in supporting the work God is inspiring His Church to do--preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the whole world as a witness. God's Spirit-begotten children are His instruments in fulfilling His great commission to His Church in the end time! The members' spiritual character growth and the work of the Church are inseparable. If any member stops supporting the work being done, that member will stop growing. But as the members support the Church, they will also grow spiritually! And as they please God, He will bless and magnify the effectiveness of the work being done!

Why Called Feast of Firstfruits?

Thus far in this lesson we have referred to the Feast of Firstfruits only briefly--yet what we have studied relates directly to the meaning of this festival! Understanding God's plan of salvation and especially the Church's role in God's Master Plan is essential to understanding the meaning of God's third annual Holy Day. Why? Because the day of Pentecost pictures the firstfruits of salvation, and the job they are now doing, empowered by God's Spirit!

God established His annual festivals and Holy Days in conjunction with the two annual agricultural harvests in the land of Palestine. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread come at the beginning of the spring grain harvest; the Feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost comes at its end. The fall festivals are associated with the large fruit harvest of summer and early autumn. But it is the spiritual harvest God is most concerned with! The spiritual harvests are patterned like the physical harvests--first a small harvest, then a large one. The spring festivals illustrate to God's Church yearly that those He calls into His Church in this age are the "firstfruits"--the first group to be given God's Spirit and offered salvation--the relatively small beginning of His spiritual harvest.

1. What were God's instructions regarding the Feast of Firstfruits? Leviticus 23:15-17,Leviticus 23:20. Was this festival an annual Sabbath on which the people were to assemble? Leviticus 23:21.

2. How long is the Feast of Firstfruits--Pentecost--to be kept annually by God's people? Leviticus 23:14,Leviticus 23:21. Did Christ's disciples know they should keep the day of Pentecost? Acts 2:1;Acts 20:16;1 Corinthians 16:8.

COMMENT: Jesus did not abolish Pentecost or any other annual Holy Day. Quite to the contrary, Christ told His disciples to be in Jerusalem so on that Holy Day they would receive God's Spirit. If the disciples had not been observing God's Holy Days, they would not have been there to receive God's Spirit! And long after Christ's death, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, kept the festival of Pentecost with Gentile converts. The Encyclopaedia Britannica has this to say about the New Testament Church's observance of Pentecost: "The Jewish feast was primarily a thanksgiving for the Firstfruits of the wheat harvest, but the rabbis associated it with remembrance of the Law given by God for the Hebrews to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The church's transformation of the Jewish feast to a Christian festival was thus related to the belief that the gift of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus was the Firstfruits of a new dispensation that fulfilled and succeeded the old dispensation..." (article "Pentecost," 15th edition).

3. What special offering did the Old Testament priests make on the day of Pentecost? Leviticus 23:17.Does the leaven in these loaves typify sin? 1 Corinthians 5:7.

COMMENT: Since the Feast of Firstfruits was a harvest festival, representing an end result, baked loaves, rather than unbaked flour, were waved to be accepted by God. The leaven in the loaves represented the fact that God's spiritual firstfruits had sin in their lives. (Of course, they had to repent of sin and be cleansed by Christ to be acceptable to God.) There were two loaves--one to represent the patriarchs, judges, prophets and kings of the Old Testament period whom God called and the other to represent the true Christians of the New Testament Church.

Pentecost, or Firstfruits, pictures God's first spiritual harvest-- mortal human beings translated into spirit-composed God Beings! God's Church shall be that firstborn harvest (Hebrews 12:23)--born into God's Family at Christ's return.

4. Are Spirit-begotten Christians the Firstfruits of God's Master Plan of salvation? James 1:18.Do Christians today have the Firstfruits of God's Spirit? Romans 8:23.Are specific Christians also called Firstfruits in the Bible? Romans 16:5;1 Corinthians 16:15;Revelation 14:4.

COMMENT: The 144,000 of Revelation 14:1-5 are not the only Firstfruits (the Greek text has "firstfruits," not "the firstfruits"). All who will be in God's first spiritual harvest, the first resurrection, are firstfruits. This will include Old Testament prophets and all true Christians.

5. What defines whether one is a member of God's Church and part of the spiritual firstfruits? Romans 8:9,Romans 8:11, Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.Did the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets have God's Spirit? 1 Peter 1:10-11.But when was the first time God gave His Spirit to a large group? Acts 2:1-4.Did the day of Pentecost thus mark the beginning of the New Testament Church? Acts 2:1, Acts 2:41, Acts 2:47.

COMMENT: On the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, God sent His Spirit to begin His Church--to beget and strengthen the Firstfruits He was beginning to call into His Church, symbolically represented by one of the "wave loaves." The New Testament festival of Pentecost is now a memorial commemorating the founding of the New Testament Church of God through the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

God's Church observes the Feast of Firstfruits as an annual reminder of this step in God's Master Plan: God's people today are merely the firstfruits--the small first group to be offered salvation through Christ. The world, except for the few called, is cut off from God--not yet called to salvation--neither saved nor lost--not yet judged. But the members of God's Church ARE being judged (1 Peter 4:17)--judged in how well they are preparing for God's Kingdom! The day of Pentecost pictures the Church being called and trained for the special mission of preparing for the time when God will open salvation to the world, when they will be kings and teachers, co-rulers and co-saviors with and under Christ their Husband!

Christ--First of the Firstfruits The Feast of Firstfruits pictures God's firstfruits--all who will be born into God's Family at the first resurrection--the first group of humans to be harvested by God and given glorious, powerful immortal life. But one human has already been born of God--more than 1,950 years before the first resurrection. He is the first of the firstfruits, and was pictured in Old Testament rituals by a symbolic ceremony during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 50 days before

the Feast of Firstfruits. The meaning of this ceremony is important, even though it is no longer performed since the Old Testament priesthood is no longer needed.

1. Was the first part of the spring grain harvest to be waved before God to be accepted by Him? Leviticus 23:10-11.

COMMENT: Since most modern translations use the word "sheaf," the traditional name for this wave offering has been "wavesheaf." However, the priests did not wave a sheaf. The word "sheaf" is translated from the Hebrew word omer, which means a measurement of about two quarts or two liters. The Jews traditionally cut a sheaf, beat out the grain, then ground the first of the firstfruits into flour and offered an omer of that flour. (See the Jewish Encyclopedia, article "Omer.")

Some modern translations of the Bible have given the passage describing this wave offering the erroneous subhead "the Feast of Firstfruits." Subheads are not part of the original text; they are not inspired. The wave offering was not a "feast"; it was merely a ceremony that involved primarily the priests. The difference is clear when we look at the original Hebrew words. As we learned earlier in this lesson, the Feast of Firstfruits is another name for the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. In the verses that refer to the Feast of Firstfruits (Exodus 23:16;Exodus 34:22;Leviticus 23:17,Leviticus 23:20; Numbers 28:26), "firstfruits" is translated from the word bikkuwr. It refers to the results of the entire spring harvest.

However, the firstfruits referred to in Leviticus 23:10-11 are reshiyth, perhaps better translated "first of the firstfruits." This was the very first of the spring harvest, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

2. On what day was the first of the firstfruits wave offering made? Leviticus 23:11.

COMMENT: The Pharisees interpreted "the morrow after the Sabbath" as the day after the first annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Sadducees, who were mostly priests, said the wave offering should be made on the day after a weekly Sabbath--always on a Sunday. The correct day becomes clear when we examine the context.

3. Must the date for the Feast of Weeks be counted beginning on the day the first of the firstfruits was offered? Leviticus 23:14-16;Deuteronomy 16:9-10.

COMMENT: According to the reasoning of Rabbinic Judaism, Pentecost is on the 6th day of the third month.

4. The offering of the first of the firstfruits marked the beginning of the first harvest of each year. Now let’s notice the way in which Jesus Christ, the first of God’s spiritual harvest, became the spiritual fulfillment of that offering. Who was the first to be resurrected from the dead into God’s Family? Acts 26:23.Was He therefore the first of the firstfruits of God’s spiritual harvest? 1 Corinthians 15:20,1 Corinthians 15:23; Colossians 1:13-15,Colossians 1:18.

COMMENT: All who will be born into God’s Family at the first resurrection will be firstfruits, the results of God’s first spiritual harvest. They are pictured by the Feast of Firstfruits. Christ, who became a born Son of God at His resurrection more than 1,900 years ago (Romans 1:4), was the first of the firstfruits, pictured by the first of the firstfruits ceremony--50 days before Pentecost.

5. After Christ was resurrected from the dead, did He have to ascend to His Father in heaven? John 20:17.On that same day, after returning to earth, could His disciples then touch Him? Read Matthew 28:1-10,especially Matthew 28:9, and John 20:19,John 20:27. What day of the week was it? John 20:19,first part.

COMMENT: Early on the Sunday morning during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Christ would not let anyone touch Him because He had not yet ascended to His Father. But later that same day, Christ did allow His disciples to touch Him. This clearly shows that Christ ascended to heaven and was accepted by His Father as the spiritual "first of the firstfruits" on the same day the Levitical priests were commanded to offer the first of the firstfruits to be accepted by God!

Christ therefore fulfilled the symbolism of the first of the firstfruits on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath--not an annual Sabbath. If it had been the first annual Sabbath that was intended by the words "the Sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11,then the sheaf or omer would have been waved on Friday in A.D. 31. But on Friday the Messiah was dead, buried in a sealed tomb. So the explanation in Rabbinic Judaism of Leviticus 23:11 is incorrect.

Christ’s resurrection or harvest was necessary before any of the remaining spiritual harvests could be reaped (see Leviticus 23:14 for this truth in symbol).

Now notice also how Pentecost is counted.

6. How are the authorities in the Church to count the days toward Pentecost? Leviticus 23:15-16.

COMMENT: The Hebrew wording in Leviticus 23:15-16 means "beginning with" the starting point. The English word "from" is therefore misleading. The New American Bible (1970) makes the correct method of counting very clear: "Beginning with the day after the Sabbath, the day on which you bring the wave-offering sheaf, you shall count seven full weeks, and then on the day after the seventh week, the fiftieth day...," you shall keep the Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:15-16). The day of the wave offering, the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was day one. Day seven would be the next weekly Sabbath. Day 49 would be the seventh Sabbath, and the 50th day would be a Sunday, "the day after the seventh week" or "Sabbath" as the original Hebrew and the Authorized Version have it. A more detailed proof of how to count the day of Pentecost is in our free reprint article "How to Reckon the Day of Pentecost." The correct dates for Pentecost for the next few years are published in God’s Sacred Calendar. It is free for the asking.

New Covenant--Completion of First Harvest The Sinaitic covenant, commonly called the "Old Covenant" by Christians, was a marriage agreement between Israel and the Logos, the Spokesman of the God Family. The basis of that covenant was the Ten Commandments, which Israel agreed to obey, as a wife obeys her husband. According to Jewish tradition, the Ten Commandments were given on the day of Pentecost. But the Holy Spirit was not then given to the nation. The coming of the Holy Spirit did not occur until another Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47) for the New Testament Church. The Sinaitic covenant ceased to be in effect when the Logos, Christ, was killed. We now look forward to a new covenant.

1. Has the Lord promised to make a new marriage covenant with His people? Jeremiah 31:31-34.

COMMENT: The weakness of the Sinaitic covenant was not its laws, but in the people (Hebrews 8:8). They were not able to keep the law because they did not have the Holy Spirit.

2. Under the terms of the proposed New Covenant, what will the Lord do? Ezekiel 11:19-20;Ezekiel 36:26-27;2 Corinthians 3:3.

COMMENT: The New Covenant will not be made with mortals who cannot keep their promises--it will be established only with immortal spirit beings who have proved, by their lives, their willingness to obey their future Husband, the "LORD" of the Hebrew Bible who became, through human birth, the Jesus of the Greek New Testament.

Although the New Covenant has been proposed, and Christians today overcome sin and live by the laws of that covenant through the power of the Holy Spirit, it will not be finalized until the first resurrection. Only then will God's children be given the fullness of God's Spirit to enable them to perfectly resist all sin.

3. Are Spirit-begotten Christians now engaged or betrothed to Christ? Romans 7:4;2 Corinthians 11:2.When will the marriage--the ratification of the New Covenant--take place? Revelation 19:6-9.

COMMENT: God's Church will be the Bride of Christ. Christ, the Messenger of the Covenant (Malachi 3:1), will come to His spiritual Temple, and make the New Covenant--a marriage agreement. God's law will be written in their hearts so completely that they can be perfect, righteous and able to assist Christ in ruling, teaching and administering God's law perfectly. The Spirit-born Church will become Christ's New Covenant wife, and that divine marriage will produce children. Christ and His Spirit-born Bride will be a ruling and teaching team. Through them God will open salvation to all, ultimately producing thousands of millions of additional Spirit-born children of God. More on that in future lessons.

Notice in Revelation 19:7 that the Church will have "made herself ready." Each member of God's Church must grow in righteous character and be prepared--ready--to help Christ rule and teach. Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)shows that some who think they are prepared for the New Covenant marriage will be shut out. When the Church is ready both in numbers and in character, and the world has been sufficiently warned, Christ will return. Our next lesson reveals the exciting details of the events leading up to Christ's re turn!

----------Back of lesson note---------- Where is the true Church? Is there really only one? If so, what about the people who are not a part of it? Are they forever lost, cut off from God's Spirit? You will find the answers to vital questions such as these in the recommended reading for this lesson: Where Is The True Church?, Predestination--Does The Bible Teach It? and "Just What Is The Holy Spirit?"

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct

answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. Of the 5,000,000,000 people alive today, God has called and put into His Church A. as many as He can.

B. about 100,000.

C. almost 10,000,000.

D. about 20 percent--the 1,000,000,000 who claim to be Christians.

2. Before the vast majority can live in a world of peace, truth and opportunity for salvation, A. Jesus Christ must return and set up the Kingdom of God.

B. Satan must be prevented from deceiving humanity.

C. spiritual-minded rulers and teachers must be prepared to assist Christ.

D. All of the above.

3. Before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples He would A. give them the Holy Spirit.

B. call everyone who would hear them preach.

C. rapture all true believers to heaven.

D. All of the above.

4. God’s New Testament Church began when A. Christ fed the multitude of 5,000.

B. God’s Spirit was given to about 120 disciples on Pentecost, A.D. 31.

C. Christ gave the Sermon on the Mount and concluded with an altar call.

D. John the Baptist came baptizing and announcing that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

5. The Feast of Firstfruits A. comes at the end of the Palestinian spring grain harvest.

B. pictures the firstfruits of salvation.

C. is a yearly reminder that God is calling only a few out of this world.

D. All of the above.

6. If Adam had eaten from the tree of life, he would have been A. guaranteed salvation instantly.

B. given an immortal soul.

C. given God’s Holy Spirit, and an opportunity for salvation.

D. All of the above.

7. After Adam and Eve sinned, God A. cut them off from access to His Spirit.

B. told them their penalty would be eternal torment in hell.

C. began to try to correct the damage and redeem them.

D. cursed Satan and then bound him.

8. Since no one could be given eternal salvation before Christ paid the penalty of sin, A. God immediately instituted animal sacrifices and rituals to pay the penalty of sins.

B. God sent the Messiah to earth right after Adam sinned to minimize the damage.

C. God's plan required that the vast majority be not yet judged and not yet allowed to understand His truth.

D. all non-Christians are condemned to eternal suffering.

9. Since the vast majority do not now have an opportunity for salvation, God will A. resurrect them after the Millennium to physical life and give them an opportunity.

B. judge them by the morals of their societies.

C. judge them according to their consciences.

D. give them eternal life no matter what they may have done.

10. The purpose uppermost in God's mind is A. getting as many as possible saved as soon as possible.

B. finding a way to reverse Satan's apparent success.

C. helping missionaries reach the millions who are not yet saved.

D. restoring His government to the earth.

11. To prepare for the restoration of His government on earth, God is now A. calling a few to prepare for His Kingdom, which will be the government that restores His laws worldwide.

B. working in the churches of this world.

C. emphasizing faith and grace, instead of obedience, as the way to salvation.

D. struggling with Satan for the souls of mankind.

12. When Jesus preached to the multitudes, He spoke in parables A. so everyone would understand.

B. but explained their meaning only to His disciples.

C. and called everyone to be His disciples.

D. so they would repent and be forgiven.

13. The members of God's Church are now preparing for God's Kingdom by A. speaking in tongues, thereby demonstrating their spirituality.

B. trying to convert the multitudes.

C. being taught by and supporting the ministers God has chosen to preach His Gospel to the world.

D. storing enough food to last through the Great Tribulation.

14. The spiritual Temple that Christ will return to at His Second Coming A. is God's Church, His firstfruits.

B. will be built by the Jews.

C. is the Moslem Dome of the Rock, the building now on the Temple Mount.

D. will be an interdenominational building soon to be built on the Mount of Olives.

15. Who will help Christ rule and teach after God's Kingdom is established on earth?

A. Millions of angels.

B. The politicians, educators and theologians of today's world.

C. The members of God's Church, who are now being trained for their future responsibilities.

D. The Bible does not reveal this matter.

16. Why are the firstfruits called and given their opportunity for salvation before the vast majority are called?

A. Because it is easier to be saved now.

B. So they can be prepared as kings and priests, co-rulers and co-saviors with Christ.

C. As special favors to those God chooses.

D. Because they have more natural abilities than those who are not called in this age.

17. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Christians can overcome sin and righteous character only through power of God's Spirit.

B. The work of the Church is done by the power and inspiration of God's Spirit.

C. Christians must not only have God's Spirit, but they must also be yielded to it.

D. God's Spirit forces His children to do the works He wants.

18. God uses humans to support and do His work because A. they are being trained by their participation.

B. that's the quickest, easiest way.

C. they do the job better than angels could. D. no one else will do the job.

19. The annual Feast of Firstfruits, the day of Pentecost, pictures A. God's Church being called and trained for their future jobs as rulers and teachers.

B. all those who will be born into God's Family at Christ's Second Coming.

C. the first group to be called to salvation, and the job they are now doing, empowered by God’s Spirit.

D. All of the above.

20. In ancient Israel, the Levitical priests made a special wave offering on the day of Pentecost--two leavened loaves that represented A. man’s dual nature.

B. the firstfruits called during the Old and New Testament periods.

C. that humans can be sinful yet accepted by God.

D. the two ways humans can be saved.

21. The Feast of Firstfruits is A. the day God gave the Ten Commandments, according to Jewish tradition.

B. an annual reminder to God’s Church that they are the first to be offered salvation.

C. a memorial of the beginning of the New Testament Church, which first received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, A.D. 31.

D. All of the above.

22. The Levitical priests were commanded to ceremonially wave once each year the first of the firstfruits of the grain harvest. This wave offering A. was to be presented annually on the day after the first annual Sabbath.

B. was called the Feast of Firstfruits.

C. represented our Savior’s appearance in heaven to be accepted by the Father on the very day the ceremony occurred.

D. was presented before God annually on the day that both Sadducees and Pharisees agreed upon.

23. Greek-speaking Jews and Christians came to call the Feast of Firstfruits pentekoste, which means "fiftieth," because A. the firstfruits harvest was about one-fiftieth or two percent of the total harvest.

B. it was the fiftieth day after the cutting of the omer or first of the firstfruits.

C. they gave one-fiftieth of their harvest to the priests.

D. it was the fiftieth day of the year.

24. Jesus Christ fulfilled the symbolism of the omer or first of the firstfruits wave offering by A. becoming the firstborn Son of God, the firstborn of many brethren.

B. being resurrected on Sunday morning.

C. being the first and only begotten Son of God.

D. His birth in Bethlehem.

25. The New Covenant A. includes spiritual laws that Christians today should keep as their part in that covenant.

B. is a marriage agreement between Christ and His Church.

C. will be finalized at the first resurrection.

D. All of the above.

Lesson 28

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 28

1986

_____ FEAST OF TRUMPETS _____ Why World Won't End in Cosmocide The Feast of Trumpets pictures the singularly most important event in world history--the Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

WHY are the churches of this world confused over the most important knowledge available to this generation? Your Bible reveals in graphic detail the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in supreme power to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. Yet the world seems to understand almost nothing about this prophetic event and the annual festival that pictures it!

Think of it! God, in a very few years, will send the living Jesus Christ again--this time to save mankind from nuclear mass destruction, to end human misery and suffering, and to usher in peace, happiness and joy for all mankind. He will come to rule over and judge all nations and usher in the happy, peaceful world tomorrow.

What a far cry this is from the doctrine that "heaven is the reward of the saved."

Christ to Establish a New Civilization For nearly 6,000 years, ever since the sin of Adam, God has allowed us humans to reap the consequences of going our own ways. Man now stands poised to destroy all life on this planet. And unless Jesus Christ returns to earth to restore the government of God and put an end to warfare, not a single human being would be left alive! In God's 7,000-year Master Plan of salvation, the first 6,000 years have been allotted to man to do as he wills. During these 6,000 years, civilizations have developed based on the way of Satan, who sits on the throne of the earth.

Christ, at His return, will end Satan's rule, and begin 1,000 years of God's rule, the rule of the Kingdom of God on earth. A new civilization based on God's law will grip the earth. Peace, happiness and prosperity will soon be everywhere!

Firstfruits Harvested at Christ's Return

God uses the spring and autumn agricultural harvests of Palestine as symbolic types of His spiritual harvests of humankind. The spring festivals picture those God has been calling to become His Spirit-begotten children as the "firstfruits" (James 1:18), the relatively small beginning of His spiritual harvest of all humankind into His divine Family.

Then in the early autumn, the festivals of the later harvest season picture God calling the rest of humanity to salvation after Christ's return.

God begins His annual festivals with the Passover, which reminds us that the Messiah's--Christ's--sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:7)makes it possible for the firstfruits to be forgiven their sins.

Next comes the Feast of Unleavened Bread, picturing the continual need for God's people--the firstfruits--to put out the "leaven" of sin (1 Corinthians 5:8)from their lives and to obey God.

Then the day of Pentecost, the final spring festival, is observed as a memorial of God's sending forth, first, His law at Sinai and, later, His Holy Spirit at Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47) to spiritually beget and to strengthen the firstfruits of His salvation. But the firstfruits will not be reaped into God's Family until they are "born again" (John 3:3-8)--resurrected and changed into spirit. That will not occur until Christ comes again--and that brings us to the next festival, the Feast of Trumpets! The Feast of Trumpets is, in a sense, the focal point, the central, pivotal Holy Day in God's plan. It not only pictures the terrible time of misery and war to befall this generation, but also the intervention of Christ to save the living from annihilation and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. It also pictures the coming of Christ to resurrect the firstfruits from the dead.

Beginning of Great Fall Harvest

Christ's return, announced by the last trumpet, will usher in the Millennium--the 1,000-year period when He and the resurrected saints--the firstfruits--will rule on earth. Then will begin the great spiritual harvest into God's Family.

During the Millennium all mankind will learn God's truth, and be offered, freely, salvation and sonship in God's Family. Most will choose to obey God and will be born into the Family of God. And we, the firstfruits, reaped into God's Family at Christ's return, will assist Christ in reaping that great spiritual harvest of human beings into the divine Family of God.

Now let's begin our study on the Feast of Trumpets. Understand exactly how this festival fits into God's great Master Plan.

LESSON 28 Christ to Intervene in World Affairs As the disciples saw Christ ascend to heaven in A.D. 31, two angels told them that He would come again (Acts 1:11). "I will come again," Jesus had told His disciples earlier (John 14:3).

Christ came more than 1,950 years ago as a humble messenger to announce the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. But this time, when He returns, He will come in all the power and supernatural glory of God's Kingdom!

Instead of submitting to death as the sacrificial Lamb of God for our sins, Jesus Christ will return to earth to put an end to sin, forcibly!

1. Will Christ return to earth for the purpose of setting up the Kingdom of God and judging the nations? Revelation 11:15-18.Will He come meekly, or with God's wrath against a rebellious mankind? Revelation 11:18. Will the nations of this world surrender peacefully to the government of God? Same verse.

COMMENT: The nations' political rulers will be furious when they realize that Christ has come to abolish the governments of this world and to establish the Kingdom of God, which will rule over all

the earth from headquarters in Jerusalem.

Note also that all English translations of the first part of Revelation 11:18 speak of "the time of the dead, that they should be judged...." This is an error and is disproved by Revelation 20:5,which shows that the time of the dead to be judged is after the 1,000 years are over. The later Greek manuscripts do have the expression "the dead" in Revelation 11:18,but early manuscripts and the official printed Greek text of the Greek Orthodox Church have "the time of the nations that they should be judged...." In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus revealed to His disciples the outline of events that would lead up to His Second Coming. Let’s notice what He reveals concerning the Feast of Trumpets and the coming time of world war.

2. What is the sign that will announce the return of Christ--is it the loud sound of a trumpet? Matthew 24:30-31.

COMMENT: If you do not already have a copy of our free booklet titled The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last, be sure to send for it immediately. It describes in detail the time sequence of events from now until the end of man’s rule and the return of Jesus Christ.

3. Did Jesus say that the coming Kingdom of God would be established on earth during a time of world war? Matthew 24:3,Matthew 24:6-8, Matthew 24:21. Also see Luke 21:31.Will this time of world war be the time when man finally has the power to wipe out all life from the face of the earth? Matthew 24:21-22.

4. Did Jesus promise to cut short this time of great tribulation for the sake of a small group of people called the "elect"? Matthew 24:22. When will this happen? Matthew 24:33-34.

COMMENT: The world today is an armed camp, bristling with awesome weapons that could extinguish human civilization from the face of this planet! Jesus said of this day, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." We are now living in the very days Jesus Christ spoke about--and unless these days are shortened, no flesh would be saved alive!

It is our generation--the world of today--that will witness the destructiveness of nuclear warfare. But our present generation will also witness the last-minute intervention by Jesus Christ to save humanity from cosmocide. Our generation will witness the return of Jesus Christ in great power and glory to set up the Kingdom of God. The trumpet of war will sound, and the seventh trumpet, announcing the victory of the King of kings, will be blown before this generation passes away! The Meaning of Trumpets

Turn in your Bible to Leviticus 23:1-44, the main chapter that outlines all of God’s Holy Days. Let’s learn what it and other passages in the Old Testament reveal about the Feast of Trumpets.

1. When is the Feast of Trumpets to be held each year? Leviticus 23:23-25.

COMMENT: Seven is God’s special number signifying completion and perfection. The seventh month of God’s sacred calendar contains the final festivals outlining God’s Master Plan of salvation. The first day of the seventh month marks the beginning of the final phases of God’s plan.

2. Is the Feast of Trumpets one of God’s annual Sabbath days? Leviticus 23:24. Are God’s people permitted to do their secular work on this annual Sabbath? Leviticus 23:25.

3. Are God’s people commanded to come together before God in a holy convocation on this Holy Day? Numbers 29:1.

4. What unique activity was commanded for this fourth Holy Day? Leviticus 23:24.Was this day to be "a memorial of blowing of trumpets"? Same verse.

COMMENT: It is from this ceremony that the Feast of Trumpets gets its name. The Hebrew statement, "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" signifies "a memorial of triumph, or shouting for joy [with trumpets]" (The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, Fleming H. Revell Company, New Jersey; originally published by Bagster and Sons, Ltd., London).

5. Did ancient King David understand that the Feast of Trumpets was to be a day of singing and shouting for joy? Psalms 81:1-4.

6. How were the trumpets to be blown on the Feast of Trumpets? Read and summarize Numbers 10:1-10,especially noting Numbers 10:10. Were silver trumpets to be used to announce the feasts and to call God’s people to assemble? Numbers 10:2, Numbers 10:10.

COMMENT: In addition to the silver trumpets that were blown on the Feast of Trumpets, something else was blown. Jewish tradition preserves the record that in addition to the silver trumpets (chatsotserah in Hebrew), a ram’s horn (shophar in Hebrew) is also blown annually on the first day of the seventh month--the Feast of Trumpets (Talmud, "Rosh Hashana," Mishnah 26b). The silver trumpets could produce a variety of musical notes, but the ram’s horn produced only a piercing blast. This piercing blast is often referred to in the Bible as a shout, or noise--it did not have a musical connotation but signified a warning.

7. Is the tremendous sound of the voice of God compared to the sound of a great trumpet, or the blast of a ram’s horn? Exodus 19:16-19;Exodus 20:18;Revelation 1:10.

8. Were trumpets blown specifically on days of gladness, solemn days and at the beginning of months--including the seventh month? Numbers 10:10.

COMMENT: The Feast of Trumpets is a day of gladness and great rejoicing, but it also has a contrasting note of solemnity to it. That is because of the earthshaking events that will occur just before Christ’s return. It was the blast of the ram’s horn that gave great solemnity to the Feast of Trumpets.

Trumpets an Alarm of War

Since the use of the shophar or ram’s horn on the Feast of Trumpets makes that feast day unique, what did the sound of the ram’s horn mean to Old Testament Israel? Let’s understand how the ram’s horn was used, and what its piercing sound signified to those who heard it.

1. What was Jeremiah’s reaction when he heard the sound of the ram’s horn? Jeremiah 4:19-21.

COMMENT: The trumpet, or ram’s horn, was used as an alarm of war. Its sound filled those who heard it with fear because they knew it signified that the horror of war was imminent! It is this

warning of an imminent crisis that sets apart the Feast of Trumpets from God’s other Holy Days. It is this warning of war that gives the joyous Feast of Trumpets its contrasting note of solemnity.

2. Was a ram’s horn sounded when an approaching enemy was seen by a watchman of the Israelites? Ezekiel 33:2-6.

3. Whom has God set as "watchmen" over His people? Ezekiel 33:7-9. Are God’s faithful servants through all ages responsible for warning the world of impending war? Amos 3:6-7.Also see Isaiah 58:1.

COMMENT: In ancient Israel, trumpets were also blown as a prelude to important messages. The Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, symbolically used their voices like trumpets to blare warnings to God’s people. And God’s servants today are doing the same thing.

4. Has God revealed to His true servants what is going to happen before Christ’s return to earth? Read and summarize Matthew 24:1-14.What is the message God’s faithful servants are bringing to all nations? Matthew 24:14.

COMMENT: God’s true Church in this end-time generation is preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the nations of this world by means of television, radio and the printed page. People in all walks of life are being warned that before the restoration of God’s government to this earth, there will come, first, great errors in religious teaching, then wars and rumors of wars, then religious persecution, ending in the most terrifying world war this world has ever experienced!

We are--at this time--in the recess between rounds two and three of these world wars. World War III is coming, and only those who are accounted worthy in God’s Church will fly into a wilderness where God will protect them.

5. For what reason does God bring war on a nation? Compare Isaiah 58:1 with Jeremiah 4:22 and Hosea 4:6;Hosea 8:1-4.

Christ Pleads With the Nations

Now turn to the book of Revelation, in which is found the prophecy of the seven trumpets, symbolic of the terrifying, cataclysmic world events to occur just before Christ’s return.

1. What is the time-setting of the seven trumpets--is it a time of God’s wrath against rebellious mankind? Revelation 6:16-17.

COMMENT: The symbolic trumpets portray the day of the Lord--the day of God’s wrath, the time when God intervenes in world affairs to punish the world for its evil! It is the time God pleads with all flesh in the physical language humans will understand!

2. Is the time of Christ’s supernatural intervention in world affairs announced by awesome supernatural signs in the heavens? Revelation 6:12-16. Will men who have been leading lives of sin be terrified with fear and want to hide from God when they realize He is supernaturally intervening in world affairs? Revelation 6:15-16.

3. What is the very next thing to happen after the signs of Christ’s coming appear? Revelation 7:1.

COMMENT: These four winds are the winds that blow the first four of the seven trumpets. The trumpets announce God’s direct intervention in world affairs to spare mankind from the destruction of all flesh--human and animal life.

4. Will God protect His faithful servants--including those who turn to Him during this, yet future, time of world turmoil? Revelation 7:2-3.Where did these servants of God come from? Read and summarize Revelation 7:4-14, especially noting Revelation 7:14.

5. Did these people repent of their sins sometime during or at the end of the Great Tribulation? Revelation 7:14.

COMMENT: The 144,000, as well as the great innumerable multitude from all nations referred to in Revelation 7:9, repent of their old sinful ways and turn to Almighty God in personal surrender. God then put their sins under the blood of Jesus Christ--the Passover Lamb (Revelation 7:14). "These are they," states one of the elders at God’s throne, "which came out of great tribulation." These multitudes will receive eternal life, and serve God day and night in His Temple (Revelation 7:15).

6. What will happen after God’s faithful servants are sealed by His Spirit, which gives them protection from the plagues announced by the trumpets that will sound during the day of the Lord? Revelation 8:1-6.

7. What will occur on earth when the first angel blows his trumpet? Revelation 8:7.

COMMENT: A gigantic firestorm will burn all green grass and one third of the trees. Burned vegetation will be the first punishment for continued refusal to submit to the government of God and refusing to obey His commandments.

8. What does the blast of the second angel’s trumpet announce? Revelation 8:8-9.

COMMENT: The seas will be gravely affected by this plague. One third of the seas will turn to blood, one third of life in the seas will be destroyed, and one third of the ships, mainly used for trade and warfare, will be destroyed! As each plague from God falls on the wicked and disobedient, those who surrender to God, who begin to obey Him and forsake the ways of this evil society, will be protected from the horrible punishments yet to come.

9. Next, what happens to part of the earth’s supplies of drinking water when the trumpet of the third angel is sounded? Revelation 8:10-11. Will many die from drinking this poisoned water? Revelation 8:11.

COMMENT: God will next punish unrepentant sinners by making one third of the waters of the earth unfit for human consumption. The waters will become bitter, causing many to die.

10. What terrifying plague is announced by the fourth trumpet? Revelation 8:12.

COMMENT: Irregularities in the sun and moon brought men in ancient times to the realization that God Almighty was intervening in human affairs! Although terrified because of the heavenly signs, most people will still continue in sin, despite God’s repeated warnings to repent!

Catastrophic World War

1. Will there be further cataclysmic events that will jolt humanity? Revelation 8:13.Are these three woes the same as the final three trumpets? Same verse.

COMMENT: Three is God’s special number signifying finality. These three woes involve three final major battles, each so horrifying that it is called a "woe" by Almighty God. Each battle is so destructive that only God will be able to repair the damage man’s armies will do to the surface of the earth. At the third battle--the third woe and last trumpet--all mankind will be saved from extinction only by a miracle from God. If God did not personally intervene in this climactic war, men would destroy the last vestige of human life from the face of the earth!

These terrifying events make the Feast of Trumpets a solemn day. But to those who have begun to obey the government of God now, it is a time of rejoicing. Today’s lawless societies will be abolished, and the Kingdom of God will be established on earth by Jesus Christ!

2. What is revealed about the first woe? Read and summarize Revelation 9:1-12.Is the first woe the same as the fifth trumpet? Revelation 9:1, Revelation 9:12.

3. Does the Apostle John describe terrifying "locusts"--grasshoppers-- that will be used to inflict pain on men? Revelation 9:3-10.

COMMENT: John used the symbolic term locusts to describe the terrifying war machines that would be invented by scientists and used by the military in this final world conflict! Notice that these symbolic locusts or grasshoppers are driven by men and are able to fly (Revelation 9:7, Revelation 9:9). They will make a tremendous noise and are protected by armor plating.

These superweapons of destruction and world conquest were completely unfamiliar to the Apostle John. He could only describe them in the language of his day. These terrifying weapons of war probably now exist in simple design in our modern military arsenals. At the time of the fifth trumpet and the first woe, it will be plainly evident just what these weapons are and how they will be used.

4. Who is the real leader of this army that is equipped with these awesome weapons of mass destruction? Revelation 9:11.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word abaddon, and the Greek word apollyon both mean "destroyer"! The sinister power that will guide this army is Satan the devil!

5. Where does this army, with its diabolical leadership, come from? Revelation 9:2-3. Is this symbolic " bottomless pit" referred to elsewhere so we can identify the army that proceeds from it? Revelation 17:8.Is this superarmy of the beast power--that is, the final restoration of the Roman Empire in Europe--backed by a great false religion? Revelation 17:7-13.

COMMENT: For a detailed explanation of the beast power and the false religion that will dominate it, request our free booklet Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?

6. Who will be spared from the attack of the beast power? Revelation 9:4.

COMMENT: When the whirlwind attack of the armies of the beast thunders against their enemies to the east, those who have the seal of God in their foreheads will be protected! But millions of modern-day descendants of the ancient 10 tribes of the House of Israel--including the United States, Great Britain and other nations in northwestern Europe--will have been conquered by a

surprise attack only a very few years before, and will be in physical and spiritual slavery! These people, who are now being warned by God’s servants of the coming captivity, will be unprotected from the rampant violence of the final world war--unless they repent of their sins and receive the seal of God’s Holy Spirit.

Meanwhile, hordes from the east will be preparing to attack the beast power. But rather than let them obtain the advantage by striking the first blow, the beast will have turned to attack them in the full fury of his military might! This attack--using an the terrifying destructive power the beast can devise--will be the first woe. It will be the beginning of the all-out struggle for complete world domination between two Eurasian rivals for world rule.

Now the stage is set for the second all-out battle for human domination of the world. The second woe is ready to begin--the sixth trumpet is ready to sound! The Second Woe

1. Are the sixth angel’s trumpet plague and the second woe clearly the same? Revelation 9:12-13.What will happen when the sixth trumpet is blown--who will even dare to threaten and make war on the beast power? Revelation 9:14-16. And how are their weapons described? Revelation 9:17-19.

2. How many people will suffer the torment, torture and death inflicted by the armies of the east as they counterattack against the armies and cities of the beast power? Revelation 9:15-18.

COMMENT: It is this mass destruction of human life that Jesus Christ’s personal intervention will halt! If such battles were permitted to continue, all human life would be destroyed (Matthew 24:22).

3. How are the armed forces of the east described? Revelation 9:16-19.

COMMENT: Again, the Apostle John could describe these end-time, terrifying weapons only by comparing them with things familiar to him! As man’s technical knowledge mushrooms, man will use the weapons described here.

4. What else can we know about the superarmy as it attacks the armies of the beast power? With millions being slain by nuclear war, how will a man’s life be valued? Isaiah 13:12-16.Will this destruction be wrought by the descendants of the Medes and their allies, who are living to the northeast and east of modern Babylon? Isaiah 13:17-18.

COMMENT: The Medes and Persians under King Cyrus captured Babylon in 539 B.C. The descendants of the Persians are in Iran and the Medes in the Ukraine today.

5. Is Babylon (God’s name for the political and religious system that has sprung from the ancient city of Babylon and has been perpetuated by Satan in the Roman Empire and its restorations) prophesied to fall a second time? Revelation 18:2;Isaiah 21:9.

COMMENT: The counterattack by the modern-day Soviet-led descendants of the Medes and their allies will contribute in a major way to the fall of the beast, spoken of here as "Babylon." For a better understanding of the calamities that will befall the last revival of the Roman Empire, read Jeremiah 50:9-16,Jeremiah 50:40-242;Jeremiah 51:7-11. The fall of ancient Babylon was only the smaller historic fulfillment of the much greater future end-time destruction that will befall the modern "daughter" of that ancient city.

6. After the devastating counterattack on modern Babylon by the armies of the east, will men yield to God’s government? Revelation 9:20-21.

7. Will God continue to send His faithful messengers throughout this period to plead with mankind to repent? Revelation 11:3-6.But will men turn to God after hearing these two witnesses? Or, in a fit of frenzy and rage, will the beast cause them to be put to death? Verse 7. Where will these two witnesses be killed? Revelation 11:8.

COMMENT: Christ was crucified in Jerusalem, which had become as evil as Sodom and Gomorrah, as sinful as Egypt, in God’s sight. The two witnesses will lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for everyone to see.

8. When the beast has murdered God’s two witnesses, what will his subjects do? Revelation 11:9-10.Will God, who has the power of life and death, resurrect His two witnesses in the sight of their murderers, further proving that He had sent them to prophesy? Revelation 11:11-12.

9. Will a great earthquake then destroy a 10th part of the city? Revelation 11:13. Will these events occur during the second woe, the sixth trumpet? Revelation 11:14.

Seventh Trumpet Announces Christ’s Return

1. What will happen when the seventh trumpet sounds and the third woe begins? Revelation 11:14-15.Who will then be given the kingdoms or governments of this world? Revelation 11:15. Will this be a time of real rejoicing for the servants of God, including the angels in heaven? Revelation 11:16-17.

2. But what will be the reaction of the nations of this world? Revelation 11:18.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, the new world Ruler, will not be automatically accepted by the warring nations as the King of the earth. The world organized in the United Nations--the "all nations" of Bible prophecies-- will, in joint effort with the beast and the Soviet East, gather their armies in the Holy Land to challenge Christ. They will consider Him to be their common enemy, and will be angry at Him for coming to take control of all earthly governments. They know that with Jesus Christ ruling the earth, their human schemes can never be completed.

It is this climactic battle--the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty--that will determine the outcome of World War III, and who will rule the earth!

3. Is this time of God’s intervention the time of His righteous wrath on rebellious mankind? Revelation 11:18.What more is revealed about this time of God’s wrath? Revelation 15:1.

COMMENT: Just as the seventh seal is divided into the seven last trumpets, so the seventh trumpet is divided into the seven last plagues. These plagues will finally crush all rebellion and bring mankind to its knees in a repentant attitude.

4. Are God’s angels who will pour out the seven last plagues on the earth clothed in white linen, a symbol of righteous judgment? Revelation 15:6.

COMMENT: God, who is very merciful, will not wait any longer for men to repent of their evil deeds. Power-mad politicians at the helm of human governments will have already destroyed

much of the earth, and unless God intervenes with force to stop warfare, no human would be left alive!

5. How are the seven last plagues described? Read and summarize Revelation 16:1-4,Revelation 16:8-21. Because men refuse to repent, will God continue to send each plague in sequence? Revelation 16:9-11.

6. Will God prepare the way for the kings of the east and their armies to cross the Euphrates into the Holy Land? Revelation 16:12. Is this part of God’s plan to gather the armies of all nations that remain rebellious to His government into one place for the final battle of World War III? Revelation 16:13-14. See also Zephaniah 3:8 and Joel 3:9-14.

7. Where will God battle with the wicked forces of man’s government? Joel 3:12,Joel 3:16. Will this last battle for earthly control be in the valley of decision? Joel 3:14. Is it also called the Valley of Jehoshaphat? Joel 3:2, Joel 3:12.

COMMENT: Armageddon is the English word for the Greek name for the Mount of Megiddo. Megiddo is a small town about 55 miles north of Jerusalem, situated in the large bowl-shaped Valley of Jezreel, also called the Plain of Esdraelon. It is here that the armies of rebellious mankind will gather to challenge Jesus Christ in battle near Jerusalem to determine who will rule the earth.

8. Will Christ make war in righteousness against those nations that fight Him and His armies? Revelation 19:11;Isaiah 11:4-5.Is Christ going to smite the nations with His sharp sword, symbolic of His divine power, and rule them with a rod of iron? Revelation 19:15.

9. Will Christ tread the "winepress" of God’s wrath at this time? Revelation 19:15. Is the winepress of God’s wrath symbolic of the great battle Christ will fight against unrepentant, disobedient and rebellious mankind in order to save humanity from extinction? Revelation 14:19-20;Revelation 19:17-21;Isaiah 63:1-6.

10. Even though Christ will destroy the armies at His coming, will He still have to plead with men to repent of their wicked ways? Jeremiah 25:30-33,especially Jeremiah 25:31.

11. Who will be defeated in this climactic battle of World War III? Revelation 19:18-20.

12. After all organized military resistance to the Kingdom of God has been crushed, will Christ then punish the leaders of this world’s political and religious system that fought Him? Revelation 19:20.

COMMENT: God’s Feast of Trumpets pictures this time of climactic world war and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. When God intervenes, and He will in this generation, His faithful servants will rejoice at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They will understand what is happening in world affairs because they have been keeping the Feast of Trumpets--the Holy Day in God’s Master Plan of salvation that pictures the return of Jesus Christ to earth to rule all nations from Jerusalem.

Firstfruits Harvested at Last Trumpet

1. Why will God’s elect rejoice at the sound of the final trumpet, when all nations on earth will be mourning? Matthew 24:30-31.

COMMENT: In the final battle of World War III--at the seventh trumpet and third woe--Almighty God will supernaturally intervene to spare the human race from total destruction--for the sake of His elect (Matthew 24:22).

2. When Christ returns to earth with the shout of an archangel and the trumpet of God, what will happen to those who have faithfully obeyed God's government? 1 Corinthians 15:52;1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.When will this change to immortality occur--will it be at the sound of the last trumpet? 1 Corinthians 15:52.

3. What is this change that will take place? 1 Corinthians 15:53-54. Who will experience this change from physical human flesh to immortal spirit life? 1 Corinthians 15:52.

COMMENT: When the Apostle Paul uses the term "we," he is speaking of true Christians who have yielded their lives to God in obedience to His law and who have receded His Holy Spirit. These are the "elect" who will be raised from the dead to be given immortal life in the first resurrection, as well as those "elect" who are still alive at Christ's Second Coming.

It is this small group of saints who will be the "firstfruits" harvest of God's Master Plan of salvation. It is they who will "marry" Christ, as discussed in detail in Lesson 17.

4. What is said of those who will be in the first resurrection? Revelation 20:6.See also Revelation 3:21.

COMMENT: The resurrection of the elect will occur at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when He returns to rule over all nations as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Then those who have received God's Holy Spirit during their mortal lifetime, will be resurrected to immortality and will inherit Christ's world-ruling Kingdom.

5. Will Christ reward the saints--give them crowns and offices of rulership--at His coming? Revelation 11:18;Isaiah 40:10;Revelation 6:2-11;2 Timothy 4:8;1 Peter 5:4.

COMMENT: The firstfruits of salvation will have the great honor of being Christ's assistants in the wonderful work of building a new civilization in the world tomorrow. They will rule with Christ, helping to reap the greater spiritual harvest during and after the Millennium.

Last Trumpet Announces Second Exodus

1. As soon as God has harvested the firstfruits of His Master Plan of salvation at the first resurrection, what will He do? Isaiah 27:12-13.

2. Will this regathering of the modern-day descendants of the ancient 12 tribes of Israel begin to take place at the last trump? Isaiah 27:13. Will these people have been oppressed by the nations into which they were taken captive? Same verse; Isaiah 10:20-22.

3. Will God have permitted His people--the descendants of ancient Israel--to be scattered among all nations? Isaiah 11:11-12.Will God have to deliver them a second time from slavery in Gentile nations? Isaiah 11:11, Isaiah 11:16. Will this be similar to the exodus of ancient Israel from Egypt? Isaiah 11:16.

COMMENT: Modern-day descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel--including, but not limited to, the United States, the British Commonwealth and the democracies of northwestern Europe--will go into captivity before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They will be downtrodden, starving, afflicted and hated by all nations. But God will deliver them out of their national captivity.

4. Will this future exodus from around the world be much greater than the exodus from Egypt in the days of Moses? Jeremiah 16:14-15;Jeremiah 23:3-8.

COMMENT: These people will not be changed to immortality when Christ returns--but, instead, will be taken to the Promised Land as physical human beings. They undoubtedly will have heard the warning message of God's end-time Church proclaiming the terrible war and captivity soon to come upon the earth, but they did not heed (Hosea 5:8-9). Consequently, they went into captivity.

5. Will the descendants of ancient Israel loathe themselves for the evils they committed? Ezekiel 20:42-43.Will God give them a repentant attitude for the first time? Same verses.

COMMENT: The vast majority of the modern-day Israelites, who descend from the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes," are not even aware of their identity. Nor do they obey God's commandments. For this reason, they will go into national captivity. But the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will once again deliver them from captivity, and bring them back to the Holy Land.

End-time Warning

Almighty God holds His faithful ministers responsible for warning the modern descendants of ancient Israel of His imminent punishment for their grievous sins (Ezekiel 33:1-16).

1. What will happen if God's watchmen don't warn of impending national disaster? Ezekiel 33:6.

COMMENT: Today, God is warning the end-time generation through His own called and chosen ministers whom He has commissioned to shout the warning-- to blow the trumpet of impending world war.

It is the warning of God's watchmen that millions are hearing over the World Tomorrow program. It is the message of God's Master Plan of salvation that millions are reading about in the Plain Truth and Good News magazines, the booklets, and this Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course now in your hands. There is no other organization doing God's work of proclaiming the Gospel to the world in this end time! The vast majority of those who hear and read God's warning message are not preparing for the time of world turmoil and devastating war that is coming. A few, however, are acting on the knowledge God has revealed through His chosen servants. A few hear and fear to disobey the Word of God. Only these few will be given protection from the terrors to come. This protection is available to those who are willing to forsake the broad, easy path this evil world is taking toward destruction. Those who are willing to yield themselves to the authority of Jesus Christ, and do what He says--submitting themselves to His divine direction--can participate now in God's plan.

2. In the days of Ezra, did the congregation of Israel--the Old Testament Church--keep the Feast of Trumpets? Nehemiah 8:1-2.Did Ezra read the law to the people on the Feast of Trumpets? Nehemiah 8:3-8. Did the ministers of God in the Old Testament read and explain so the people could understand, just as God's ministers do today? Nehemiah 8:8.

3. What did Nehemiah teach the people concerning the Feast of Trumpets? Nehemiah 8:9-12. Although the people had been weeping in repentance for not knowing God's law, and for not keeping the Feast of Trumpets, when Nehemiah explained that this day was a day of great rejoicing, what did they do? Nehemiah 8:12.

COMMENT: Members of God's Church today also rejoice on the Feast of Trumpets because they look forward to the return of Jesus Christ when they will be made immortal, and will rule and reign with Him on the earth. Then, there will come peace, happiness and joy--WORLDWIDE! But this utopian world tomorrow will not happen immediately. Satan must be put away, restrained from influencing humanity. Only then can the world have peace. This event is pictured by the Day of Atonement. The next lesson tells us all about this festival and what it pictures in God's Master Plan of salvation.

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The Feast of Trumpets pictures the A. singularly most important event in world history.

B. return of Jesus Christ to earth to rescue humanity from annihilation.

C. beginning of the world tomorrow.

D. All of the above.

2. When Jesus Christ returns to earth, A. not a single human being--not even animal life--will be left alive.

B. He will establish a new civilization based on God's law.

C. He will not take the throne of the earth from Satan.

D. mankind will welcome Him.

3. More than 1,950 years ago, Christ A. told His disciples He would rapture away true believers when He returns.

B. came to announce that He would at that time set up the Kingdom of God.

C. said "I will come again."

D. came to earth to put an end to sin, forcibly.

4. The nations, at Christ's return, will A. surrender peacefully to God's government.

B. be furious because of divine intervention interfering in their plans.

C. have finally formed a world government to bring peace.

D. have solved most of the world’s problems.

5. In Revelation 11:18,the phrase, "the time of the dead, that they should be judged,"

A. is an exact translation of the official printed Greek text of the Greek Orthodox Church.

B. proves the dead will be judged at Christ’s return.

C. should be translated, "the time of the nations, that they should be judged."

D. is an exact translation of what John the Apostle was inspired to write.

6. What sign will announce the return of Christ?

A. The loud sound of a trumpet.

B. The unification of all Christian churches.

C. The formation of a world supergovernment.

D. None of the above.

7. Christ promised that He would cut short the time of great tribulation A. to allow humans one more chance to solve their problems.

B. not to save humanity from cosmocide.

C. for the sake of a small group of people called "the elect."

D. to show Satan who really is in charge of world affairs.

8. The seventh trumpet, announcing the victory of the King of kings, will be blown A. before this present generation passes away.

B. in a time of world war.

C. in a time when man has the power to wipe all life from the face of the earth.

D. All of the above.

9. The Feast of Trumpets is to be observed A. on the first day of the seventh month.

B. 50 days after the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

C. on the seventh day of the first month.

D. None of the above.

10. According to Numbers 10:1-36, silver trumpets were blown specifically A. on days of gladness.

B. on solemn days.

C. at the beginning of months-- including the seventh month.

D. All of the above.

11. The piercing blast of the shophar or ram’s horn A. filled those who heard it with joy and gladness.

B. was forbidden on the Feast of Trumpets.

C. gave the joyous Feast of Trumpets its contrasting note of solemnity.

D. was not an alarm of war in Old Testament Israel.

12. God’s faithful servants today A. are not responsible for warning the world of impending war.

B. are preaching the true Gospel and warning of impending World War III.

C. are forbidden by Christ to use their voices symbolically like trumpets to warn God’s people.

D. are not "watchmen" over His people.

13. The seven trumpets of the book of Revelation A. announce cataclysmic world events to occur just before Christ’s return.

B. portray the day of Satan’s wrath against mankind.

C. precede the Great Tribulation.

D. are blown by the two witnesses.

14. Which one of the following is FALSE?

A. The trumpets of Revelation portray the day of the Lord, the time when God intervenes in world affairs.

B. God will protect His faithful servants during the future time of world turmoil.

C. The 144,000 and innumerable multitude of Revelation 7:1-17 will be protected from the trumpet plagues.

D. Christ will blow each of the seven trumpets.

15. When the third angel blows his trumpet, A. the sun and moon will cease shining, and the stars of heaven will fall to the earth.

B. a gigantic firestorm will burn all green grass and one third of the trees.

C. one third of earth’s drinking water will become bitter and poisonous.

D. only life in the seas will be gravely affected.

16. The three woes described in Revelation A. are the same as the final three trumpets.

B. involve three final major conflicts, each so horrifying that it is called a "woe."

C. will not strike those who have the seal of God in their foreheads.

D. All of the above.

17. Which one of the following is FALSE?

A. The modern-day descendants of the ancient House of Israel will be protected from the crisis at the close of this age.

B. The first woe depicts the armies of the beast attacking enemies to the east.

C. John used the symbolic term locusts to describe weapons unfamiliar to him.

D. The beast power will be the 10th and final revival of the Roman Empire.

18. The beast power--that is, the final restoration of the Roman Empire in Europe--will A. be guided by Satan the devil.

B. be backed by a great false religion.

C. arise out of the symbolic " pit."

D. All of the above.

19. The sixth trumpet A. and second woe are not identical.

B. announces the counterattack by a union of nations to the east against the armies and cities of the beast.

C. heralds the return of Jesus Christ.

D. signifies events that occur before the prophesied day of the Lord.

20. The two witnesses, whom God will have sent to plead with mankind to repent, will A. be put to death by the beast power.

B. lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one-half days.

C. be resurrected in the sight of their murderers, further proving that God sent them to prophesy.

D. All of the above.

21. Which one of the following statements about the seventh trumpet is FALSE?

A. It is divided into the seven last plagues.

B. It announces Christ’s return to take over the kingdoms of this world. C . God’s Master Plan of salvation will be complete when it is blown.

D. The third woe and seventh trumpet are identical.

22. Jesus Christ, the new world Ruler, will A. be immediately accepted by the warring nations as the King of peace.

B. destroy the armies sent against Jerusalem in the climactic battle of World War III.

C. forgive the two primary leaders of the end-time political and religious system.

D. maintain the present civilization pretty much as is.

23. At the last trumpet, God’s elect--the firstfruits--will A. be harvested into God’s spirit-composed Family.

B. be resurrected and/or changed to immortal life.

C. rejoice, but the nations on earth will be mourning.

D. All of the above.

24. At Christ’s return, the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel will A. be left scattered in captivity among all nations.

B. be delivered from captivity and taken to the Promised Land as physical human beings.

C. be changed to immortality to rule with Christ.

D. not loathe themselves for the evils they committed.

25. God’s faithful ministers in this end time are A. warning of impending world war, but few will heed and turn to God in repentance.

B. not held responsible for warning the descendants of ancient Israel of God’s imminent punishment for their sins.

C. announcing God’s warning message, which most people will heed.

D. working to unite all churches before Christ’s return.

Lesson 29

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 29

1986

_____ DAY OF ATONEMENT _____ The World at One with God

After Jesus Christ returns, what will be the most important step in establishing peace on earth? No major denomination knows the answer. Why? This significant step is pictured by the annual Day of Atonement.

YOU have probably heard that there is a "great controversy" between God and Satan. That Christ and the devil are in a running battle for men’s souls. If this were true, then Satan is winning! More people are "unsaved" today than ever before. Satan, according to this view, is made out to be more powerful than Christ. But Satan is not stronger than Jesus Christ! Jesus is returning, as He promised, to depose Satan and set up the Kingdom of God. When Christ returns He will not leave this world--its governments, its societies, its religions, its sports, its economy--in the hands of the devil. Instead of violence and competition, there will be a new era of peace and cooperation.

Greatest Obstacle to World Peace Removed For nearly 6,000 years Satan has invisibly swayed the nations. He has influenced civilizations, governments and leaders. He has inspired world wars and helped cause the misery, hate, suffering and violence that have plagued mankind throughout history.

Satan has been this world’s ruler ever since God gave him that office when he was known as the Bringer of Light--Heylel in Hebrew or Lucifer in Latin. But Satan’s days in that office are numbered.

God is not in competition with Satan--there is no "great controversy"! The question of who will rule this earth has already been decided.

Jesus Christ has qualified to replace Satan. When He returns to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords He will take over the supreme government over this world and depose Satan the devil! This world will then have peace at last.

Day of Atonement Pictures Satan’s Removal God’s Holy Days were given to remind us how, step by step, God is working out His Master Plan. The first three festivals--Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost--picture God’s first spiritual harvest, the firstfruits--and their forgiveness, calling, preparation and training before Christ’s return. The last four festivals show the plan God has for making salvation available for all who have not yet been called. The Feast of Trumpets pictures Christ’s intervention in human affairs to stop the suicide of the human race in nuclear war. Christ will be swift and firm in punishing those who are destroying the earth. The fifth annual Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, pictures the fifth step in God’s Master Plan--deposing

Satan from his position as world ruler, and his removal to a place completely away from mankind. Satan will be "bound" for 1,000 years, no longer able to deceive the nations or influence mankind to sin (Revelation 20:1-3). The Day of Atonement is perhaps the most unusual Holy Day, for it is the one day on which God has commanded His people to fast--to abstain from food and drink from sunset to sunset.

Humility Through Fasting

Jesus Christ, the future ruler of earth, qualified to rule by being completely submissive to the government of God and perfectly humble. One of His last acts with His disciples included establishing the New Testament Passover ordinance of foot washing to picture humility. His suffering and death to pay the penalty of human sin was an act of extreme humility, of complete submission to His Father’s will, of perfect love for us. True Christians in like manner must become humble to rule with Christ. No ruler in God’s Kingdom can be arrogant or selfish (Mark 10:42-45).

Fasting on the Day of Atonement is a vivid reminder of the state of mind necessary for salvation--of humility, godly sorrow, earnestly seeking God and His way.

Today, the world is filled with pomp and pride and does not realize it is cut off from God because of sin (Isaiah 59:2)--sin that has been inspired by Satan. Only those few whom God is calling are now reconciled to God. The vast majority must wait. After Satan’s imprisonment on a coming Day of Atonement, all humanity will be reconciled with God--made humble and at one with Him, as pictured by the Day of At-one-ment. Let’s understand the meaning of this unique fifth festival of God.

LESSON 29 Fifth Step in God’s Plan

1. After the terrible events pictured in the book of Revelation by six seals and six trumpet plagues, will mankind repent and turn to God? Revelation 9:20-21.Even after the seven last plagues--the wrath of God--will many humans still be rebellious? Revelation 16:10-11,Revelation 16:21.

2. Why won’t men and women repent--is it because they have been deceived? Revelation 12:9:Revelation 13:11-14.Are they spiritually drunk? Revelation 18:3.Will the army that attempts to fight Christ also be influenced by demons? Revelation 16:13-14.Is Satan himself behind this deception? Note the word dragon in Revelation 16:13.

3. Does the Bible reveal that today’s world is invisibly ruled by Satan and his fallen angels? John 14:30;2 Corinthians 4:4;Ephesians 2:2;Ephesians 6:12.However, will the world to come be ruled by angels? Hebrews 2:5.

COMMENT: The Bible mentions three worlds--"the world that then was" that perished in a worldwide flood (2 Peter 3:6), "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4), and "the world to come"--the world tomorrow. In the world tomorrow, the devil and his demons will no longer influence earth’s nations, its societies and religions.

4. Who will replace Satan as earthwide ruler? Revelation 5:12;Revelation 19:11-16;Matthew 28:18.Who will replace the demons as rulers over the nations? 1 Corinthians 6:2-3;Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 20:6.Will Satan and the demons figuratively be under the feet of the saints? Romans 16:20.

5. After Christ returns to enforce the government of God on earth, will Satan be bound with a symbolic chain and locked up to prevent him from deceiving mankind? Revelation 20:1-3.Where will he be cast? Verse 3. Also compare Revelation 18:2 with Isaiah 13:19-22.

Binding of Satan Pictured by Day of Atonement

After Christ returns to restore to earth the government of God, Satan will be completely restrained for 1,000 years. Let’s now see how this fifth step in God’s Master Plan is pictured by a symbolic ceremony in the law of Moses.

1. What annual Sabbath follows nine days after the Feast of Trumpets? Leviticus 23:27.Are God’s people commanded to assemble before Him on the Day of Atonement? Same verse; Numbers 29:7.

COMMENT: This world’s churches misunderstand most aspects of God’s Holy Days. Almost universally they have not kept these annual reminders of God’s plan, and they thus do not know what God’s plan is. The world has especially misunderstood the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. And no wonder! For this day more than any other Holy Day is hated by the great deceiver because it pictures his defeat. The 16th chapter of Leviticus details what God commanded the Levitical high priests to do on the Day of Atonement. These rituals, which are no longer performed, pictured the binding of Satan--the fifth step in God’s plan to restore His government on earth and bring the knowledge of salvation to everyone. The purpose of the rituals God gave His Levitical priests was to remind the Israelites of their sins, that the penalty for sin was death, and that they would need a Savior to pay their penalty for them. The symbolism of the sacrificial laws was fulfilled by Christ’s death in A.D. 31. Therefore sacrifices need not be offered today, nor can they be, because there is no functioning Levitical priesthood nor is anyone else authorized to perform those physical duties.

Even though the rituals are no longer performed, we can still see their symbolic meanings. But we must first understand a few important details about God’s Tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood.

Once the Israelites had agreed to worship the LORD, Yahweh, the One who became Jesus Christ, (Exodus 24:3), He then began to detail to them how He should be worshiped. The first instructions He gave were for His Tabernacle (Exodus, chapters 25-27 and 30). Aaron and his sons were divinely chosen as priests (chapter 28). God’s priests were appointed, not elected. God was in charge. The Tabernacle included a courtyard enclosed by curtains. In the courtyard were an altar, a laver and a central tent. The tent was divided into two sections by a veil. The section behind the veil was called the Most Holy Place or the Holiest of All (Hebrews 9:3). The front section of the tent was the "holy place" (Exodus 26:33). The Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle represented God’s throne in heaven. The Ark of the Covenant, with the wings of the cherubim spread overhead, was in the Most Holy Place (Exodus 25:10-22;Exodus 26:33-34). Inside the Ark were the tables of stone on which God had written the Ten Commandments. The lid of the Ark, which was called the mercy seat, was where Yahweh--the One who later became Jesus Christ--manifested Himself.

Only one person--the Levitical high priest--was ever allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. He was allowed to enter it only once each year--only on the Day of Atonement to perform a special ceremony depicting the binding of Satan. God thus emphasized how important this day is. This day is symbolically linked to man’s access to God.

Let’s go through Leviticus 16:1-34 and briefly note the rituals that were to occur on the Day of Atonement. After we get the overview, we’ll go back and study the symbolism involved in each step.

1. Was Aaron (and all succeeding high priests) allowed to go behind the veil to the mercy seat as often as he wished? Leviticus 16:2;Hebrews 9:6-7.On which day was he allowed to enter the Most Holy Place? Leviticus 16:29-30.

2. Before entering the Most Holy Place, did the high priest have to bathe and dress in special priestly garments? Leviticus 16:4.Did he sacrifice a young bull to make atonement for himself? Leviticus 16:3, Leviticus 16:6, Leviticus 16:11.

COMMENT: The sacrifice was done on the altar in the Tabernacle courtyard. No one but the high priest was allowed in the courtyard (Leviticus 16:17). This was not a public ceremony--it was between the high priest and God alone.

3. Did the high priest then take a censer full of hot coals from the altar, with his hands full of finely ground incense, and go into the Most Holy Place? Leviticus 16:12. What did he do with the censer and incense? Leviticus 16:13. What did he sprinkle on the mercy seat? Leviticus 16:14.

4. Had the high priest previously taken two goats from the congregation? Leviticus 16:5, Leviticus 16:7. Did he cast lots to determine what each goat would represent? Leviticus 16:8. Was the goat representing the LORD killed as an offering for sin? Leviticus 16:9. Leviticus 16:15-16.

5. Was the other goat presented alive? Leviticus 16:10. Were the sins of the congregation symbolically put onto the live goat? Leviticus 16:21. What was then done to this goat? Leviticus 16:22.

COMMENT: Bulls, goats and rams were a normal part of the daily sacrificial rituals (Leviticus 1:2-5,Leviticus 1:10; Numbers 28:4,Numbers 28:11, Numbers 28:15). Two things were particularly unusual about the rituals done on the Day of Atonement: 1) the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, and 2) one goat was ceremoniously led into the wilderness. What connection do these rituals have with the fifth step in God’s plan--the restraining of Satan? The answer is made clear in the New Testament book of Hebrews.

Levitical High Priest Represented Our Eternal High Priest

1. Did the innermost part of the physical Tabernacle, made with hands, represent God’s heavenly throne, the true throne? Hebrews 8:1-2;Hebrews 9:23-24.Did the priestly ceremonies foreshadow heavenly things? Hebrews 8:4-5.Is Jesus Christ now our eternal High Priest? Hebrews 2:17;Hebrews 3:1;Hebrews 6:20;Hebrews 7:26;Hebrews 8:1.

COMMENT: The book of Hebrews was written to people familiar with the priestly functions. The writer shows that Christ fulfilled all of their symbolism and has become a high priest of much higher and eternal rank.

There were many Old Testament high priests, because each would eventually die and a new one would be installed (Hebrews 7:23). But Christ, being immortal, is now High Priest forever (Hebrews 7:24). Perfectly sinless, Christ did not have to offer sacrifices for Himself, as the Levitical

high priests did (Hebrews 7:26-27). Thus Christ, in sacrificing His sinless life, could permanently pay for others' sins. After His resurrection to eternal life, He was consecrated as our High Priest forever (Hebrews 7:28).

It is clear that Aaron and his descendants--the high priests in succeeding generations--pictured Jesus Christ. Their role in the Day of Atonement rituals symbolizes what Christ did in atoning for our sins.

2. Were Aaron and his descendants without sin? Romans 3:10,Romans 3:23. Did he therefore have to make sacrifices for his own sins to be able to even temporarily represent Christ? Hebrews 7:27;Leviticus 16:6.

COMMENT: A sin offering was a sacrifice required from a person who sinned (Leviticus chapters 4 through 7). The sacrifices pictured that the penalty of sin is death. Animal death cannot pay a human penalty (Hebrews 10:4)--the sacrifices were only foreshadows picturing Christ's sacrifice. Jesus Christ, God made human, paid the penalty of human sin by His unjust death.

3. What was done with some of the blood of the bullock that was offered as a sin offering? Leviticus 16:14.Why? Hebrews 9:7,Hebrews 9:21-22.

COMMENT: In the Ark of the Covenant beneath the mercy seat were two tables of stone on which were the Ten Commandments. Since these laws had been broken, making the sin offering necessary, the sacrificial blood was sprinkled on and before the Ark, thus symbolically atoning for transgressions of God's eternal spiritual law.

4. Did the high priest's special garments represent righteousness? Revelation 19:8.Did bathing represent a clean heart, a clean conscience? Hebrews 10:22.

5. When he went into the Most Holy Place, the high priest created a cloud of sweet incense. What did that represent? Psalms 141:2;Revelation 5:8;Revelation 8:3-4.

COMMENT: This incense pictured prayer. The priest used sweet incense; our prayers are pleasing to God. The incense was beaten fine; we should be detailed in our prayers. Too many people pray for their own personal desires, then end quickly with a generalization like: "And bless everybody else, too." As incense arises from hot coals, so prayers ascend from the righteous like a cloud, bringing God's people mercy and protection. In Old Testament times, only one person could enter behind the veil once each year. But after Jesus' death, the veil was supernaturally torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50-51). This symbolically opened the way to God's throne.

We are now allowed direct contact with God the Father through our own prayers, needing no intermediary except Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22;John 15:16;John 16:23). By using Christ's name, our prayers ascend to God's heavenly throne by the permission and with the authority of our High Priest. This contact was not possible before Christ's resurrection; the ancient Israelites' access was limited to the LORD who became Christ.

Goat Chosen for the LORD On the Day of Atonement, the high priest took two young goats from the congregation of Israel (Leviticus 16:5-7). The two goats, in physical appearance, were similar. But they were to portray two vastly different symbolic roles.

1. How was it determined which goat would represent which role? Leviticus 16:8.What happened to the goat on which the LORD’S lot fell? Leviticus 16:9.

COMMENT: The LORD who dealt with ancient Israel, as we learned in previous lessons, is the member of the God Family who became Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Therefore this goat, which was sacrificed for a sin offering and whose blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat for an atonement for all Israel, represented Jesus Christ.

Although the two goats appeared to be alike, one was to typify Christ. Men were utterly unqualified to determine which goat was suitable. Therefore it was necessary for God to decide. A lot is a solemn appeal to God to supernaturally decide a matter (Proverbs 16:33). It is a sacred religious ceremony. Modern lotteries profane this ancient holy ceremony appealing to God.

Men, without God’s supernatural intervention, are unable to determine who represents Christ. Most people who think they worship Christ are actually following ministers who are deceived by the devil (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Satan has so deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9)that mankind as a whole does not know who is God and who is the adversary.

2. Did the high priest sacrifice the goat representing Christ--the goat chosen by lot "for the LORD"--as a sin offering for all the people? Leviticus 16:15-16.What did the blood of the sin offering picture? Romans 3:23-26;Hebrews 9:12-14.

COMMENT: The killing of the LORD’S goat and sprinkling its blood on the mercy seat pictured the method by which humans can be reconciled to God-- through the sacrifice of an innocent victim. Christ was that victim. He voluntarily took our guilt with Him on His cross, paying the penalty in full. Our guilt is expiated, atoned for; it ceases to exist if we accept Christ as our Savior and quit sinning. The sins of the people were borne by the goat even as Christ bore our sins on His cross (Hebrews 9:28). But Christ rose from the dead, ascended to the throne of God in heaven and shall return.

3. Did the Aaronic high priest, after killing the goat representing Christ, enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil and sprinkle the goat’s blood on the mercy seat? Hebrews 9:7;Leviticus 16:15-16.Was the Most Holy Place an earthly representation of God’s heavenly throne? Leviticus 16:2;Exodus 25:21-22;Numbers 7:89.

COMMENT: The altar, Tabernacle and mercy seat were considered defiled by their presence among the sinning Israelites. All through the year Israel’s sins were symbolically transferred to the Tabernacle and its fixtures (Leviticus 4:2-7). On the Day of Atonement this guilt was symbolically purged from the nation so God would continue to dwell with Israel. The goat’s blood symbolized the blood of Christ.

4. Did Christ, after His sacrifice and resurrection, enter behind the veil to the throne of God in heaven? Hebrews 6:19-20;Hebrews 8:1;Hebrews 9:24;1 Peter 3:22.Was it His own blood that He presented as an offering for sin? Hebrews 9:11-12.

COMMENT: The high priest, symbolically taking the atoning blood to God’s throne, represented and symbolically did the work of the risen Christ.

Both the high priest and the goat represented Christ. It was not possible for the high priest to die every year to picture Christ's death. That had to be symbolized by the goat. Nor could the goat--after it was killed--represent the risen Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest. The human high priest represented the living, resurrected Christ. That is why he had to be symbolically cleaned so carefully before he could officiate.

5. What has Christ, our High Priest, been doing for more than 1,950 years? Hebrews 7:25;Hebrews 4:14-16;1 John 1:9;1 John 2:1-2.

COMMENT: Christ is our living Savior. Christ's death has paid the penalty of all human sin. But that in itself did not complete the job of making atonement for all humans. Satan still rules this world, influencing everyone. The vast majority do not believe in Christ's sacrifice and do not obey God.

How will the job of atonement be completed? How will all mankind eventually be made at one with God the Father? The answer is revealed through the symbolism of the live goat.

Goat Led Into the Wilderness An unusual feature of the Day of Atonement rituals was the goat led alive into the wilderness. Who or what did this goat represent? Why wasn't it killed? What significance did the wilderness have? When the priest went behind the veil into the Most Holy Place, he symbolized Christ ascending to God's throne in heaven. The work he did in the Most Holy Place symbolized Christ's work for more than 1,950 years. When the priest came out, he symbolized Christ's return to earth. What did the high priest then do--and what will Christ do after He returns?

1. After the Levitical high priest had sacrificed one goat and completed his work inside the Tabernacle, did he seize the other goat? Leviticus 16:20.Did the priest symbolically place the sins of the people on the head of this goat? Leviticus 16:21.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ atoned for our sins when He took the penalty of our sins upon Himself by sacrificing His sinless life for us. When we repent of our sins, our past debt ceases to exist. The sins of the people were symbolically atoned for by the sacrificed goat (Leviticus 16:15). So what are the sins placed on the head of the live goat? The key to the explanation--and the symbolic meaning of this Holy Day--lies in correctly understanding who or what this goat represented.

2. The goat chosen by lot for the LORD represented Christ. Who was the other goat to represent? Verse 8. Was it to be banished? Leviticus 16:10.

COMMENT: The English word scapegoat is not a correct translation of the Hebrew word God inspired. The original word was azazel. Azazel, among the early Semitic dwellers in the Sinai desert, referred to Satan the devil! James Moffatt therefore translated this as "Azazel the demon."

William Gesenius wrote this: "This name was used for that of an evil demon....The name Azazel...is also used by the Arabs as that of an evil demon" (Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, page 617). "The devil, named Eblis in the Koran, was once one of the archangels in heaven, and was called Azazil, but by disobedience fell" (J.W.H. Stobart, Islam and Its Founder, page 114).

Hermann Schultz wrote: "Azazel is...an Aramaic...name for an unclean and ungodlike power, which has its abode in the wilderness, in the accursed land outside the sacred bounds of the

camp" (Old Testament Theology, translated by Paterson, 1892, vol. 1, page 405).

"The high priest...cast lots upon the two goats. One was to be for the Lord for a sin-offering. The other was for Azazel (the completely separate one, the evil spirit regarded as dwelling in the desert), to be sent away alive into the wilderness" (F. Watson, The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, 1893, page 161.)

Modern commentaries often misunderstand this azazel goat. This is not too surprising, since Satan has deceived the whole world, and deceived many into thinking he does not exist. Some commentators claim that this azazel goat represents Christ. Such theories have no biblical or symbolic support.

Let's notice a modern Jewish commentary that makes it clear that the azazel goat represented _ Satan the devil: "Azazel...was probably a demonic being.... Apocryphal Jewish works, composed in the last few centuries before the Christian era, tell of angels who were lured...into rebellion against God. In these writings, Azazel is one of the two leaders of the rebellion. And posttalmudic documents tell a similar story about two rebel angels, Uzza and Azzael--both variations of the name Azazel. These mythological stories, which must have been widely known, seem to confirm the essentially demonic character of the old biblical Azazel" (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, The Torah--a Modern Commentary, page 859). The word scapegoat carries a wrong connotation. Originally it meant "escape goat"--the goat that was allowed to escape. But today the word scapegoat signifies "one who bears blame or guilt for others." This is definitely not the meaning that God inspired. Azazel--Satan--bears his own guilt in deceiving mankind. Satan is not a scapegoat for another's sins. He will be punished for his own guilt. The real cause--the actual author--of human sin is Satan the devil (John 8:42-44;Ephesians 2:2). Satan is guilty of inspiring the sins of mankind. Christ paid the penalty for our part in every sin we Ye repent of. But He did not pay for Satan's part in these sins, or the sins of the other demons. Demons are not offered salvation, and they refuse to repent! So here, in this Levitical ritual, all of man's Satan-inspired sins were symbolically put back on Satan's head, where they belong! When Jesus Christ returns, Satan's part of the blame for mankind's sins will be placed on him, and he will then be removed from the presence of man. Justice will be done.

3. Was the azazel goat sent away from all mankind carrying his sins with him? Leviticus 16:21-22.Does the wilderness to which the goat was taken represent the land of ruins that modern "Babylon" will become? Read Isaiah 13:19Isaiah 14:23.

COMMENT: Satan, the instigator of sin, is guilty of inspiring our sins, and his guilt cannot be atoned for. His sins are placed on his own account, and then he and his sins are sent away--completely removed from the presence of God and God's redeemed children!

Satan's power over mankind is through deception and sin. Through Christ's redeeming sacrifice, we have been bought back, purchased, ransomed from the spiritual kidnapper. Satan has lost his claim to ownership, and he will be prevented from exercising that influence for 1,000 years. No longer will he be an adversary or an accuser of the brethren. Mankind as a whole cannot be fully atoned--"at one" with God--until this is done.

4. After coming in contact with the azazel goat, did the high priest have to wash himself again before coming in contact with the people? Leviticus 16:24.And did the man who led the goat away

have to wash his clothes and bathe before coming into the camp? Leviticus 16:26.

COMMENT: The symbolism is certainly that of having come in contact with the devil!

5. Is the azazel goat pictured as remaining alive? Leviticus 16:10, Leviticus 16:26.

COMMENT: Satan is a spirit being and therefore immortal (Luke 20:35-36). To signify that, the goat was permitted to live. But notice that it was turned loose only when completely removed. This represents Satan being prevented from influencing mankind after Christ's return.

Notice the fulfillment of this part of God's Master Plan, as revealed in the book of Revelation.

6. What will be done to Satan after the Second Coming of Christ? Revelation 20:1-2.Where will he be cast? Revelation 20:3. Also notice Revelation 18:1-2.

COMMENT: The "bottomless pit" or abyss was pictured by the desert wilderness where the azazel goat was banished. Satan and his demons will be chained by an angel of God (who was symbolized by the man mentioned in Leviticus 16:21). He will be completely prevented from further leading mankind into sin. No longer will Satan be able to broadcast his evil attitudes.

Fasting on Day of Atonement The Old Testament observances so far studied were ritualistic. Only the high priest and a few assistants were involved in performing them. But the whole population or congregation of Israel also had a part of its own to play. That part is to Fast and abstain from work on the Day of Atonement.

What connection is there between the removal of Satan and our fasting? Satan works in humans by appealing to the lusts of our flesh and the pride of life 1 John 2:16). Fasting denies our fleshly lusts and humbles us-- thus fasting should diminish Satan's influence in our personal lives--picturing in each of us Satan's eventual complete suppression and removal from all mankind.

1. How are we to observe the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 16:29,Leviticus 16:31;Leviticus 23:28-32.How should one "afflict" his body on this day? Isaiah 58:3;Ezra 8:21.

COMMENT: "Afflict" is translated from the Hebrew word anah, which means "to be afflicted, to humble oneself, to oppress, to depress, to fast." God inspired the same Hebrew word in Deuteronomy 8:2-3:"You shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD" (NKJ). The purpose of afflicting our souls on the Day of Atonement is to humble ourselves before God (Psalms 35:13).

2. Does the Bible command fasting on this day "forever"--"throughout your generations"--and "in all your dwellings"? Leviticus 23:29-32.Was fasting commanded for the entire congregation--even for Gentiles who wanted to worship God? Leviticus 16:29.

COMMENT: The Levitical rituals, even though they clearly picture the meaning of the Day of Atonement, are no longer performed (Hebrews 9:8-14;Hebrews 10:1-4,Hebrews 10:10-14). But God's Church does fast on this annual Holy Day.

Why are the sacrifices obsolete, yet the fasting is not? The difference between them is that the rituals were commanded to be performed by the priests as a type of the sacrifice of the death of Messiah or Christ, but fasting was commanded for the entire congregation.

God commanded His people to fast on the Day of Atonement. God’s people today obey Him. True Christians are spiritual Israelites, and they obey the commands God gave to all His people. All God’s people refrain from work on His Sabbaths; they gather for worship and fellowship on His holy convocations. All true Christians, like all Israelites, should not eat unleavened bread during that festival and should Fast on the Day of Atonement.

3. In the Bible, does fasting for spiritual reasons mean going without both food and water? Exodus 34:28;Deuteronomy 9:18;Esther 4:16;Acts 9:8-9.At what time of day should we begin fasting for the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 23:32.

COMMENT: In God’s calendar, every day begins at sunset (Genesis 1:5,Genesis 1:8, Genesis 1:13, Genesis 1:19). We should fast on the 10th day of God’s seventh month. We should not eat an unusually heavy meal just before sunset on the ninth day of the month in an attempt to defeat the intent of God’s command. Should children fast? If they are old enough to understand that God requires it on this day, they can be taught to fast for perhaps 12 or 18 hours before allowing them to fast 24 hours.

God’s law permits certain persons to be exempted from fasting. One category would be persons advised by a medical doctor that it would be physically harmful for them to fast. Babies should never be forced to fast. Most mothers produce enough milk to continue breast feeding throughout a fast day, but some do not. A few may find it necessary to drink a little water to resume feeding. People with medical conditions may need to continue their medication. They would be well advised to check with their family doctor. Diabetics may need to adjust their medication or drink some juices. The government God instituted in His Church empowers the Church to make such exception when necessity demands.

4. Did the New Testament Church keep the Day of Atonement? Acts 27:9.

COMMENT: All biblical scholars know that "the fast" refers to the Day of Atonement. The evangelist Luke wrote this more than 30 years after Christ’s crucifixion. If the Day of Atonement no longer existed, God would not have inspired those words! The early New Testament Church of God set the example for God’s Church today. And the true Church of God today keeps all of God’s Holy Days-- including the fast of the Day of Atonement!

5. Does the Day of Atonement differ from other Holy Days in that no work of any kind is to be done on it? Leviticus 16:29;Leviticus 23:30-31.

COMMENT: All "servile" work--all physi r mental labor associated with earning a living--is prohibited on all weekly and annual Sabbaths. Minor work required for food preparation is allowed for the other feasts (e.g., Exodus 12:16)--but not on the Day of Atonement. Because no food should be eaten on this day, there is no need for food preparation.

Though a day of fasting, the Day of Atonement, since it is a commanded religious assembly, is a spiritual feast of God’s Word. We must not live by bread alone.

We should not mourn as we fast and afflict our souls on the Day of Atonement. Though we sorrow for sin and its results, we can rejoice that God will, in His plan, completely eliminate it (Revelation 21:4). Though we may feel physically weak by our fast, we can be thrilled with the hope of eternal life. The Day of Atonement, like all of God's Holy Days, is a time of hope and rejoicing.

6. Why is this day kept so solemnly? Leviticus 23:28.

COMMENT: The word atonement means "to make at one with." This day symbolizes God and man being set at one: literally the Day of At-one-ment!

7. The fact that an atonement is needed shows that man is not yet "at one" with God. Why not? Isaiah 59:2;Psalms 66:18.

COMMENT: All of us have sinned (Romans 3:23). We have become separated from God. Our need for reunification--atonement--with God is emphasized by the word atonement appearing 49 times in the book of Leviticus. However, God and mankind cannot be fully at one, in full agreement, until Satan is restrained.

8. The Day of Atonement pictures Satan's defeat worldwide. How does James say we can defeat Satan in our individual lives? James 4:6-7,James 4:10.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ conquered Satan, thus qualifying to rule the world, through fasting (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus was weak physically. But He was at His strongest spiritually, because He was completely humble. He did not rely on His human strength nor on human wisdom or words. He answered Satan with God's Word. He relied on God's strength -- the power of God's Spirit in Him. So can we!

9. Was the Day of Atonement the beginning of a time of release in ancient Israel? Leviticus 25:9-10.

COMMENT: The Jubilee Year was given to the Israelites so their poor might be released from debts they were unable to pay. Every 50th year all debts were pardoned, and those who had sold themselves into slavery were freed. Land lost through poverty was restored to the family originally owning it. This was done on the Day of Atonement, thus connecting this Holy Day with a release from bondage. This is typical of man's future Atonement release from spiritual bondage--release from all spiritual debts and sins-- freedom from the temptations and deceptions of Satan and his demons--and of the restoration to each nation of its own God-ordained land (Acts 17:26). The Spiritual Reasons for Fasting The Day of Atonement should not be the ONLY day on which true Christians fast. Except for those with unusual medical limitations, all Christians should occasionally fast on days of their own choosing. Why? To defeat Satan in their lies at all seasons of the year, and to draw closer to God, becoming more at one with Him year-round.

1. Did Christ's disciples fast when Jesus was with them in person? Matthew 9:14.Did Jesus state that there would come a time when they would fast? Verse 15. Did Jesus give instructions on HOW to fast? Matthew 6:16-18.

COMMENT: Fasting should not be a "show"--it is not a proof of spirituality. The effectiveness of fasting is between us and God. How often and how long we fast should rarely be mentioned.

2. Did Jesus fast for an extended period? Matthew 4:2.

COMMENT: Jesus, since He never broke a single law of health, was in perfect health and strength. We are not. None of us should try to fast 40 days. To do so would be extremely damaging to our health, even life-threatening, and therefore a sin.

Those who are older, and those with known physiological problems such as diabetes or heart weaknesses, should seek medical advice. Some, unfortunately, cannot fast for even one day. If you have any doubts, ask competent advice. Don't assume that God will bless you if you self-righteously insist on endangering your health through an unwise fast!

3. Did Paul, supernaturally struck down, fast while waiting to learn God's will? Acts 9:6,Acts 9:9. Did he later fast often? 2 Corinthians 11:27.Are we to follow his example? 1 Corinthians 11:1.

COMMENT: Biblical examples teach us that during a spiritual fast one should neither eat nor drink. It is more humbling than merely going without food, or as some denominations teach, going only without meat.

Many have noticed that there are certain health benefits associated with fasting. This is true when done in moderation. During some illnesses, the body will enforce its own fast through vomiting and diarrhea. In such cases, one should drink plenty of fluids to avoid the dangers of dehydration. During fasts for health reasons, water or juices are often drunk. One should not confuse health fasting with fasting for spiritual reasons.

Fasting is not a natural desire, and it is sometimes unpleasant. Some people needlessly suffer from headaches when fasting. These are sometimes from caffeine addiction. Some have found it helpful to stop drinking coffee, tea or colas, several days before they begin fasting. This helps them to get such headaches over with before they begin fasting. Thus during their fast they are able to concentrate better on the real purpose of fasting--to get closer to God, to think more like He thinks. A fast should be more than simple hunger and thirst. We must see beyond the physical, and learn spiritual principles. We must not live by physical bread alone, but seek spiritual food (John 4:34;John 6:26-27,John 6:32-35, John 6:50-51). We should hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

Fasting should help us get closer to God, to spend more time studying His Word, more time in prayer and meditation, striving to learn God's will, desiring to obey. Fasting should humble us to help us be willing to yield to God's will--whether it be according to our own desires or not.

Fasting shows us how dependent we are on food and water. It reveals how much we love ourselves, and how difficult it is to give up some of self! When we get hungry, we find that we are very carnal minded. Fasting is a test to see which we will put first--will it be the lust of the flesh or the sincere desire to get closer to God? When you fast is up to you to decide. Some wait for a convenient day, but fasting is rarely convenient. It is something you must make time for-- setting aside physical pursuits and dedicating the day to spiritual pursuits. The time you dedicate to get closer to your Creator is pleasing to Him. He knows it is good for us.

It is not wrong to fast on an occasional Sabbath, but a fast is spiritually more profitable on a day without interruptions. Sacrifice your time; make room in your life for God. Whether you have drifted away from God or want to avoid drifting away, get closer to God--fast!

4. On what kind of person will God look with favor? Isaiah 66:2.Did Jesus teach that those who humble themselves will be exalted? Luke 14:11.

COMMENT: Fasting helps us realize how small and weak we are, and how much we need God. A little hunger proves to us that we, like Job, are no more than puny, insignificant little creatures (Job 25:6). Without God, we are worth no more than an animal. But with God, we are of infinitely greater value!

Fasting is not self-punishment. Any punishment that we may deserve has already been paid in full by Jesus' suffering and death. Nor is fasting a h strike to force our will on God. We should fast to humble ourselves, draw closer to God and accept His will. Fasting should help us acknowledge our own nothingness and realize our need for God's strength.

True humbling is repentance, not penance. A humble person is willing to admit his own way is wrong. He is willing to seek God's way--to ask for God's help, guidance and instructions. Note the examples of the Israelites (1 Samuel 7:3-7), King David (Psalms 35:13), Ahab (1 Kings 21:17-29), the Ninevites (Jonah 3:3-10), and the Jews (2 Chronicles 20:3-4;Nehemiah 9:1-2).

5. What does God say our attitude should be during a fast? Ezra 8:21;Isaiah 58:6-7;Joel 2:12-13;Zechariah 7:5-7.Have God's servants fasted to learn God's will? Acts 9:9;Daniel 9:3;Acts 13:2-3.

COMMENT: Fasting is an excellent time to examine ourselves spiritually, to recognize our shortcomings and overcome them. Fasting, when done in a right attitude, will help us submit to God's will, to become more at one with Him, to accept His answer to our prayers, to have greater faith, to better resist Satan's temptations.

6. Did Paul give instructions about fasting in connection with marital relations? 1 Corinthians 7:5.

COMMENT: God created sexual relations as a normal and enjoyable part of marriage. (For more information on this subject, request a copy of our free soft-cover book The Missing Dimension in Sex.) Paul told the Corinthian Christians that neither husbands nor wives should defraud the other by refusing sexual relations (1 Corinthians 7:3-4). But Paul did say they could abstain--only temporarily--if both agreed. As an example of why they might wish to temporarily refrain, Paul mentioned fasting and prayer. The Bible does not prohibit sexual relations during a fast, but Paul did permit abstinence if both agreed (1 Corinthians 7:6). The World Atter Satan's Removal

Upon Christ's return to earth in power and glory, He will order Satan bound. No longer will Satan be able to work in the "children of disobedience." The minds of men, formerly kept spiritually closed by Satan, will be opened by the Spirit of God! Freed from Satan's influence, the world will become responsive to God's way of life. For the first time, humanity as a whole will be able to understand God's Master Plan of salvation. People will then begin to realize their wrong ways, repent and receive forgiveness of their sins by accepting Christ as their Savior. Only then will man become at one with Christ and the Father, as pictured by the Day of At-one-ment!

1. What did the Apostle Peter proclaim would occur when Christ returns to earth? Acts 3:19-21.

COMMENT: Peter called the time when God's government will be restored-- the time when Satan's part in sins will be put on his own head--the "times of restitution." What needs to be

restored to earth? God’s government and His way of life. It was once offered to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but they rejected it, deceived by the serpent. The world needs obedience to God--faith instead of skepticism--reliance on the superior wisdom and experience of the Creator instead of human wisdom. We must do away with reasonings, feelings, desires and emotions based on the pulls of the flesh when it comes to obeying God. The first step for the establishment of a utopia on earth is the reinstitution of God’s authority, with enforcement of God’s law through a worldwide system of perfectly righteous kings, mayors, judges, etc. (Luke 19:17-19;Revelation 5:10).

At-one-ment will not be complete with merely putting Satan away. The greatest task will be yet remaining. People will still be hating one another. Man’s mind, man’s nature, must be refashioned--his character reshaped and remolded until it becomes "at one" with God.

2. What will be the attitude of Israel and Judah "in that time"? Jeremiah 31:9,34;Jeremiah 50:4-5.Have they been misled by their shepherds--their pastors? Jeremiah 50:6.Is this Azazel’s fault, through his ministers? 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.But "in that time," the Millennium, will Israel and Judah have any more sin? Jeremiah 50:20.

COMMENT: God says, "I will pardon them whom I reserve"--those whom He brings alive through the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. There will be at-one-ment between God and the Israelites. Their terrible national punishments will have brought them to repentance.

3. Will the nations of Israel have any more disagreements or jealousies? Isaiah 11:13.When they see Israel’s right example, will many of the Gentile nations want to follow the example set by Israel? Deuteronomy 4:6-8;Ephesians 2:11-16.

4. After Satan and his demons are put away, will some of their deception and false way of life still affect some people for a little while? Zechariah 14:17-19;Ezekiel 38:1-14.Will the war prophesied in Ezekiel 38:1-23 occur after the beginning of Christ’s Kingdom on earth? Ezekiel 38:8, Ezekiel 38:11, Ezekiel 38:14.

COMMENT: Meshech and Tubal are peoples of northern Eurasia, as are Gog and Magog; Gomer and Togarmah are other Central Asiatic peoples. These are a large portion of the human race. As nations that have been taught atheism in this age before Christ’s rule, they will at first have to be forced through circumstances and events into obeying an everliving God.

5. Will God deal severely to show them He is God? Ezekiel 39:1-7.What will the Gentiles say when they have learned the truth--and realize at last how the father of lies (John 8:44)has deceived them? Will they forsake the way of their ancestors? Jeremiah 16:19.

COMMENT: What a blessing it will be when Satan is bound! Freed from their spiritual captivity, the whole world will be taught God’s way to real peace, harmony and salvation (Isaiah 11:9). How refreshing! In our next lesson, we’ll learn more about the tremendous blessings that will come when the entire world lives in harmony with God’s laws.

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The real rulers over today's world are A. the politicians, generals and heads of state.

B. God the Father and Jesus Christ.

C. Satan the devil and other evil spirit beings.

D. wealthy businessmen and international bankers.

2. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Since Christ has already died, all humanity is now reconciled to God, at one with Him.

B. Satan deceives the world and influences mankind to sin.

C. Mankind is not at one with God because sin cuts us off from God.

D. The world cannot have peace so long as Satan is able to influence humanity to disobey God.

3. When Christ returns to earth, He will A. depose Satan, who will be bound for l,000 years.

B. take over the supreme government of this world.

C. rule all nations with a rod of iron and enforce peace.

D. All of the above.

4. The binding of Satan is A. the seventh step in God's Master Plan of salvation.

B. pictured by the Day of Atonement.

C. an event that took place more than 1,950 years ago.

D. to occur 10 days before Christ's Second Coming.

5. The Day of Atonement is

A. on July 10.

B. to be observed only by the Jews.

C. a holy convocation, a commanded assembly.

D. a day of penance.

6. The rituals God gave His Levitical priests were A. to remind the Israelites of their sins and that they would need a Savior.

B. to pay the penalty of the Israelites' spiritual sins.

C. rendered obsolete when Jesus was born.

D. designed primarily to make the people respect the priestly class.

7. We can understand the symbolic meaning of the rituals A. because they are still performed by the Jews today.

B. because commentaries reveal the full spiritual meaning clearly.

C. even though they are no longer to be performed.

D. only if we perform them.

8. The Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle A. was where the high priest offered sacrifices.

B. represented God’s throne in heaven.

C. contained the altar.

D. All of the above.

9. The Levitical high priest entered the Most Holy Place A. as often as he wished.

B. twice each day.

C. only on the Day of Atonement--thus symbolically linking this day with man’s access to God.

D. only if two or three witnesses were with him.

10. Before the Levitical high priest could represent Christ in the ceremony on the Day of Atonement, he had to A. make sacrifices for his own sins.

B. wear special garments.

C. bathe.

D. All of the above.

11. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest took two young goats from the congregation. These goats represented A. Jesus Christ and Satan the devil.

B. the Old and New Testament periods.

C. Jesus Christ before and after His resurrection.

D. the world today and the world tomorrow.

12. The goat that was sacrificed A. pictured the death of Satan.

B. was buried outside the city.

C. was not to be a sin offering.

D. pictured the sacrifice of Christ.

13. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Christ, after His death and resurrection, ascended to God’s throne in heaven.

B. The goat’s blood was poured onto the altar.

C. When the high priest went into the Most Holy Place, he symbolized Christ’s work in heaven as our High Priest.

D. Both the goat that was sacrificed and the high priest represented Christ.

14. When the high priest came out of the Most Holy Place, he A. washed himself and went home.

B. took the other goat into the wilderness.

C. symbolized Christ’s return to earth.

D. killed the other goat.

15. Which one of the following statements is TRUE?

A. The azazel goat represented the resurrected Christ.

B. Azazel was an ancient Arabic bedouin name for Satan the devil.

C. The goat was chosen for azaze1 because of its unique appearance.

D. The azazel goat was sacrificed in the wilderness.

16. After Jesus Christ returns to earth, A. Satan’s part of the blame for mankind’s sins will be put on him.

B. Satan will be removed from the presence of mankind.

C. mankind will be reconciled with God--made at one with Him.

D. All of the above.

17. After the azazel goat was led into the wilderness, it was A. released alive, picturing the fact that Satan, a spirit being, cannot die.

B. ceremoniously killed, symbolizing the destruction of Satan.

C. led back to civilization to be used in other rituals.

D. burned alive to symbolize the ultimate fate of sinners.

18. Which one of the statements below is FALSE?

A. On the Day of Atonement, the Israelites were to fast.

B. We should fast on the Day of Atonement by abstaining from food and water.

C. Fasting was a priestly ritual that is now obsolete.

D. The fast on the Day of Atonement should be from sunset to sunset--a period of 24 hours.

19. What connection is there between fasting and the removal of Satan at Christ’s return?

A. Absolutely none.

B. During the Millennium, no one will have to eat or drink.

C. Satan is the author of eating and drinking.

D. Fasting draws us closer to God and therefore decreases Satan’s influence in our personal lives.

20. Which one of the following statements is TRUE?

A. In ancient Israel, fasting was not commanded for Gentiles who wanted to worship God.

B. People may provide food on the Day of Atonement for their little children.

C. God’s law and God’s Church do not permit anyone to be exempted from fasting on the Day of Atonement.

D. Fasting is a form of punishment for our sins.

21. In the book of Acts, chapter 27, Luke mentioned "the fast."

A. explaining that it was only a Jewish observance.

B. but noted that the Apostle Paul did not observe it.

C. meaning the Day of Atonement.

D. a nautical term for the spring season.

22. The Jubilee, which occurred every 50th year.

A. began on the Day of Atonement, connecting this Holy Day with a release from .

B. was the occasion when debts were pardoned, and Israelites who had sold themselves into servitude were freed.

C. required that land lost through poverty be restored to the family originally owning it.

D. All of the above.

23. Should Christians occasionally fast on other days?

A. Yes, so we can draw closer to God at any season of the year.

B. Yes, so we can experience the pangs of hunger and thirst.

C. No--fasting reduces our faith in Christ’s mercy.

D. No--we should never hunger or thirst for anything except God’s righteousness.

24. Which one of the following is NOT a spiritual reason for fasting?

A. We should fast to humble ourselves before God, to better realize how much we need Him.

B. Fasting will force God to answer our prayers.

C. Fasting should help us draw closer to God and accept His will.

D. When done in a right attitude, fasting can help strengthen our faith.

25. After Satan has been put away, A. all mankind will immediately want to obey God.

B. there will be no war from then on.

C. human beings as a whole will come to seek God and His way, and become at one with Him.

D. mankind will remain essentially rebellious for 1,000 years.

Lesson 30

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 30

1986

_____ FEAST OF TABERNACLES _____ When the Whole World Will Be Called Only after Christ returns to earth and deposes Satan will the great spiritual harvest of humans begin.

GOD is not in competition with Satan! He is not trying to save the whole world now!

Long ago Jesus Christ announced that His message, the good news of the Kingdom of God, would be preached in this age merely as a witness to all nations--not to convert them (Matthew 24:14). When God sets His hand to save the world, He will save it! When the World Will Be Saved God's seven annual festivals picture the steps in God's Master Plan of salvation for all mankind. The first three festivals, which occur during the spring in the Northern Hemisphere, picture great events leading to the first spiritual harvest of Spirit-begotten human beings into God's Family. From previous lessons we learned that the Passover is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures our putting sin away and our constant need to obey God. Pentecost pictures the spiritual begettal and the maturing of the firstfruits of God's plan.

Then, during the fall in the Northern Hemisphere, come the last four festivals. They portray tremendous events yet to occur in God's plan. The Feast of Trumpets, the first of these four, pictures the return of Jesus Christ to raise the firstfruits to immortality and to set up God's government on earth. The Day of Atonement pictures the deposing, removal and binding of Satan for 1,000 years. With Satan's sinful influence gone, mankind can then be reconciled--made at one--with God.

Then 1,000 years of peace and prosperity will follow. Those who are the firstfruits of God's spiritual harvest--first born into God's Family and co-inheritors with Jesus Christ--will join Him in ruling the earth. The Spirit-born saints will be given the opportunity of bringing the spiritual knowledge of salvation to every human then alive and to those born during the Millennium. This happy Millennium is pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles--the sixth of God's seven annual festivals Picturing His plan of salvation.

Early Theologians Acknowledged the Millennium The New Testament Church taught the meaning and observance of God's festivals and Holy Days throughout the Roman Empire. Even many in the early Christianity that fell away from the truth retained for some time the doctrine of the Millennium--the 1,000-year rule of Christ and the Spiritborn saints (Revelation 20:1-6). The fact of the Millennium was commented on for hundreds of years--long after the death of the apostles.

Notice the testimony from the writings of theologians of the second and third centuries: In the second century, Papias of Hierapolis (in Asia Minor) is quoted as having said: "There would be a certain millennium after the resurrection, and that there would be a corporeal reign of Christ on this very earth" (Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius, translated by Isaac Boyle, book 3, chapter 39).

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, France, wrote in the latter half of the second century: "For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years it reaches its consummation."

Then, after quoting several Old Testament passages referring to the Millennium, he continues: "All such things refer not to heavenly matters, but to the times of the kingdom, when the earth has been restored by Christ" (Against the Heresies, translated by F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, book 5, chapters 28, 35). The early third century produced the same testimony. From Carthage, North Africa, Tertullian acknowledged the possibility of a promised Millennium on the earth (Against Marcion, book 3, chapter 25). Later writers, too, could be cited.

Truth Later Rejected In the fourth century the book of Revelation was removed from the general reading list of the established Christian church. Why? Because it plainly referred to the Millennium. "Thus the troublesome foundation on which chiliasm [a Greek word for the doctrine of the Millennium] might have continued to build was got rid of" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, article "Millennium").

Writing about this period of time, Edward Gibbon, in his book The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, states: "The doctrine of Christ’s reign upon earth was...considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected [by false Christianity] as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism" (chapter 15).

During and after the reign of Emperor Constantine, who ruled from A.D. 306-337, leaders in the established Christian church began to look upon the Roman Empire as the Kingdom of God. They began to view the millennial rule of Jesus Christ as having already begun!

Some professing Christian leaders of the 20th century have even gone so far as to claim that the doctrine of the millennial rule of Christ is not to be found in either the New Testament gospels or epistles, or even in the traditions of the apostles (The Question Box, William N. Emch, p. 380).

But, now, let’s turn to the Bible, the source of truth, and learn what it reveals about the Millennium, as pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles.

LESSON 30 God’s Harvest--the Feast of Ingathering

God’s annual festivals, as we learned in previous lessons, began to be made known to the congregation of ancient Israel--God’s Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38)--when the nation was first formed in Egypt.

Let’s notice God’s instructions regarding the observance of the sixth annual festival and how it pictures the coming Millennium, when the whole world will be converted and given an opportunity for salvation.

1. Does the Feast of Tabernacles begin five days after the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 23:33-34;Deuteronomy 16:13-15.

2. Does the Feast begin with a Holy Day on which all ordinary work is forbidden, and on which people are to gather before God? Leviticus 23:35.Did God command that this annual festival be kept forever? Leviticus 23:41.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16;Exodus 34:22)because it celebrated the late summer-early autumn harvest (Leviticus 23:39). This harvest festival was to be a time of great rejoicing and thanksgiving for God's abundant blessings. Today, God's Church makes known to the world that it pictures the future ingathering of the great harvest of Spirit-begotten human beings into God's Family during the 1,000-year period known as the Millennium.

3. Does the annual Feast of Tabernacles last for more than one day? Leviticus 23:34;Deuteronomy 16:15.

COMMENT: As we learned in previous lessons, God used the two yearly harvest seasons in the Northern Hemisphere to picture the future spiritual harvests of mankind into His divine Family. The spring grain harvest is small compared to the great fall harvest. The first harvest is represented by a single day--the Festival of Pentecost. It pictures the spiritual firstfruits, the relatively small number of people whom God has called into His Church before Christ's return, when they will be born into God's Family. But the Feast of Tabernacles lasts a full seven days. This shows that God's great second harvest of mankind will take a long period of time to be reaped. People will be born physically, called of God and, after fulfilling their life's purpose of growing in God's character, born spiritually into His Family all during the 1,000 years.

4. Who would decide where the Feast of Tabernacles was to be observed? Deuteronomy 16:16.

COMMENT: Only God, working through His chosen servants, chooses the place (or places--Exodus 20:24)where the Feast is to be observed, and only He changes the location--as circumstances warrant. In ancient Israel, God chose where His people were to keep the Feast. Today, God works through the government He has placed in His Church. God leads those in charge to select appropriate Feast sites around the world to accommodate the members of His Church worldwide. Tens of thousands of God's people and their families travel to these sites to observe this great Feast.

Ancient Israel Failed to Keep the Feast

Even though God revealed His festivals to the children of Israel and commanded that these festivals be kept forever, the people soon rebelled. Many finally refused to keep the Feast of Tabernacles on the days God ordained, eventually failing to keep it altogether. Let's learn what happened, and what the results of their disobedience were.

1. Where was the place that God originally set His name--designating it as the place the Feast of Tabernacles was to be kept? Joshua 18:1.Were some of the children of Israel obedient at that time in keeping the Feast? Judges 21:19.And in rejoicing? Judges 21:21.

2. Did the parents of Samuel, who became one of God's greatest prophets, keep this Feast every year? 1 Samuel 1:3,1 Samuel 1:21;1 Samuel 2:19.

COMMENT: The yearly sacrifice mentioned in these verses refers to the Feast of Tabernacles.

3. Did God later change the location for the Feast of Tabernacles and, in the early years of King Solomon, have a temple built there? 1 Kings 8:1-2,1 Kings 8:10-11. Did Solomon call the people early to the Feast to spend a week in dedicating the newly finished Temple? 1 Kings 8:65.

COMMENT: The Israelites observed the Feast of Tabernacles in the days of Solomon. But even then, the nation did not fully observe it in the way or manner God commanded (1 Kings 8:17).

4. What did wicked King Jeroboam do after he and the northern 10 tribes rebelled against Rehoboam, Solomon's son? 1 Kings 12:32-33.

COMMENT: Jeroboam assumed that where and when God's Holy Days were kept didn't really make any difference to God. His action was normal for a carnal-minded person who knows little about who or what God really is. Jeroboam's concept of how to worship God was merely his own human idea (1 Kings 12:33). Be sure to read the whole passage from 1 Kings 12:26 to the end of chapter 13. The 13th chapter reveals how God mercifully gave Jeroboam further admonition--backed up by miracles (1 Kings 13:3-4, 1 Kings 13:6)--and a further opportunity to repent. But Jeroboam did not repent of changing the date the fall festivals were to be observed (1 Kings 13:33), and as a result he suffered a terrible penalty (1 Kings 13:34).

5. Why did God finally allow the people of Israel and Judah to be militarily defeated and then deported to foreign lands? Ezekiel 20:13-16,Ezekiel 20:19-21, Ezekiel 20:24, Ezekiel 20:34.

COMMENT: Notice that in these verses the word "sabbaths" is plural, meaning the annual Sabbaths as well as the weekly Sabbath. The Bible usually speaks of the weekly Sabbath in the singular.

Because of their continued disobedience--chiefly their utter disregard of God's weekly and annual Sabbaths--the Israelites, and later the Jews, were transported into slavery.

6. Had the small remnant of Jews who returned from Babylon under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah learned that God is the Lord? Nehemiah 8:1.

COMMENT: After 70 years of subservience to Babylon, God had become real to those few Jews, as well as to those who remained in the lands of their captivity. They now knew He was really God.

7. Did they immediately begin to keep God's Holy Days, including the Feast of Tabernacles? Nehemiah 8:2, Nehemiah 8:14, Nehemiah 8:17-18. And did they immediately set about learning God's laws that, if kept, lead to peace, happiness and prosperity? Compare Nehemiah 8:18 with Deuteronomy 31:10-11.

8. Did the remnant of Jews find the Feast of Tabernacles a time of "very great gladness"? Nehemiah 8:17-18.

COMMENT: The Holy Days now held vivid meaning for the few thousand Jews who returned from captivity. Their eyes were open--symbolic of what will occur to humanity after the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus Kept the Feast

1. During Jesus Christ’s human life, were the descendants of the Jews who returned still keeping the Feast of Tabernacles? John 7:2.

COMMENT: The Apostle John called the celebration the "Jews’ feast" because he wrote primarily for the Gentiles. Before conversion, the Gentiles saw the feasts only as a part of the "different" religion of the Jews. The nation Israel had lost the knowledge of God’s Holy Days, but Judah had preserved the Old Testament Scriptures and the festivals of God and God’s calendar.

2. What unmistakable command did Jesus give His brothers and sisters? John 7:8.

3. Did Jesus, Himself, keep the Feast? John 7:10. Did everyone know that Jesus always kept God’s feasts and therefore naturally expected Him to be in Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Tabernacles? John 7:11.

COMMENT: Note that Jesus’ purpose in going to Jerusalem was not merely to preach to and instruct people. He had numerous opportunities to address the multitudes who followed Him continually.

4. Did Jesus have every reason not to go up to Jerusalem? John 7:1 and John 7:10.

COMMENT: Jesus had been present at the Feast from the first day, although He did not stand up to teach until near the middle of the seven days (John 7:14). He had arrived secretly and remained out of the limelight because certain of the religious leaders were seeking--out of jealousy--to kill Him.

5. Was Jesus merely following an Old Testament practice or was He setting a New Testament example? Matthew 28:19-20;1 Peter 2:21;1 John 2:4-6.

COMMENT: With such dangerous circumstances, if ever there was an excuse not to attend one of God’s feasts, surely this was one. But Jesus was there--boldly setting us an example that we should do likewise.

Jesus condemned the errors in the "tradition of the elders" (Matthew 15:2-3,Matthew 15:6, Matthew 15:9). He always made it clear that God’s laws were still binding, and went on to magnify them. Notice His words in Matthew 5:21-22:"Ye have heard...but I say." Christ kept every one of God’s commandments, including all of God’s Holy Days.

All Nations to Keep the Feast in the Millennium

1. In the Millennium, will Israelite tribes in addition to Judah keep the Feast of Tabernacles? Hosea 12:8-9.Will all Gentile nations join them in keeping the Feast? Zechariah 14:9,Zechariah 14:16.

COMMENT: After returning to earth in power and glory, Christ will start immediately to reeducate the people of the world through His annual festivals. The world will come to know that Christ is the Lord, and that God’s Master Plan pictures the way to physical blessings and spiritual salvation.

3. What will happen to those nations that at first refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and thus refuse to be reeducated to God’s way, in their ignorance refusing salvation? Zechariah 14:17.

COMMENT: Christ will at first have to rule with "a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:5), symbolizing absolute authority, until the nations are convinced that their fathers" ways--their "old-time

religions"--do not lead to salvation.

4. What will happen if nations still refuse to obey? Zechariah 14:18-19.

COMMENT: Those with this attitude, who stubbornly refuse to obey, will suffer from drought. If they still do not change their attitudes, plagues will afflict them until they submit to God. There are some who think God doesn't mean they should keep His feasts today. They say: "Well, I'll keep the days God made holy when I have to, but I won't keep them now." God allows them to refuse. But only those who obey Him now will be protected through the time of trouble just ahead.

Time of Great Physical and Spiritual Rejoicing

1. What is the divinely set theme for the annual observance of the Feast of Tabernacles? Deuteronomy 16:14-15.(Notice the words surely rejoice in verse 15. Other translations, such as the Revised Standard Version, render this "be altogether joyful.")

2. Does God intend for everyone--regardless of age, social class or economic level--to rejoice during the Feast? Read Deuteronomy 16:14 again. Does God intend for a husband to take his wife and children with him to rejoice together at the Feast? Deuteronomy 16:14;Deuteronomy 12:5,Deuteronomy 12:7, Deuteronomy 12:12.

3. Does God say that good food should be eaten to increase one's joy and happiness during the Feast? Deuteronomy 14:26.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of great rejoicing. For ancient Israel, it was a time of rejoicing because the abundant winter's food supply was taken in just before the Feast. But the Feast has far greater significance for God's Church today. It pictures--is a foretaste of--the prosperity, happiness, joy and universal peace that will exist worldwide under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ. Universal adherence to God's laws and revealed way of life will make the world tomorrow a supremely happy place--a utopia!

4. Does God command His people to save a second tithe (10th) of their income throughout the year to be spent in traveling to and attending the Feast? Deuteronomy 14:22-26.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles gives God's people the opportunity to live joyfully for one week--to live above what they would normally be able to afford--that they may experience a foretaste of the wealth the whole world will enjoy.

5. When the Holy Spirit is poured out freely during the Millennium, what will happen to the basic attitude or nature of humans? Ezekiel 36:26-27;Will there also be a change in the nature of animals so that all creatures will be peaceful and harmless? Isaiah 11:6-8;Isaiah 65:25.

COMMENT: Once God places His Spirit within repentant mankind during the Millennium, people will begin to express outgoing love and concern for others and will obey God. This coming change in the very nature of humans is the chief reason why the Feast of Tabernacles previews this time with such great rejoicing!

What Christ's Government Will Be Like The coming government of God will not be a democracy, or any other form of human government. In the world tomorrow Christ will rule supreme from world headquarters in Jerusalem (Revelation 19:16;Jeremiah 3:17). Ruling with and under Him will be

the Spirit-born saints (Daniel 7:14,Daniel 7:27).

Christ will be over the saints. His position will be that of the Husband. The saints--then immortal children of God--will constitute the Bride of Christ. They will be in the position of a wife, subject to her Husband--Christ.

1. In the Millennium, how will Christ's supreme government be administered in all parts of the earth? Luke 19:17-19.

COMMENT: Christ was showing through the parable of the pounds that those who develop their abilities will be rewarded with positions of rulership. There will be local administrative districts--some larger, some smaller--that will be administered by the Spirit-born children of God!

2. Does Luke 13:28 reveal the names of several faithful servants of God who will be given high positions under Christ in the Kingdom of God? Who will rule over the modern descendants of Jacob? Jeremiah 30:7-9;Ezekiel 37:24-25.

COMMENT: The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and other men of God such as Joseph, Job, Moses and David, will be brought back to life, immortal, in glorified power, to occupy high executive positions in the new world government.

3. Will Christ have certain other chief assistants, each ruling over a major nation? Luke 22:29-30;Matthew 19:28.

4. How will the immortal spirit rulers serve the people? Revelation 1:6;Revelation 5:10;1 Corinthians 6:2.

COMMENT: To help curb the possibility of tyranny, many governments in the world today are divided into separate branches. For example, in the United States of America, the execute, legislative and judicial branches of government are separate. Then there is the teaching field, which, in democratic countries, is separate from (though in most cases overseen by) the government. In God's coming Kingdom on earth, however, these four functions will be united. The Head of the God Family establishes the laws (the legislative function). The God Family will enforce the laws (the executive function). It will also interpret those laws and judge cases concerning them (the judicial function). And the God Family will be responsible for the educational function--it will faithfully teach the people God's law.

Each divine ruler will serve his subjects in genuine love and concern (1 John 4:16), never acting selfishly (Matthew 20:26-27).

5. How much power will each ruler exercise, under Christ, in his own area? Revelation 2:26-27.

COMMENT: Absolute and definite authority will exist on the spot in all parts of the world. Yet all governmental policies will be based on the pattern laid down from world headquarters by Christ Himself, and each ruler under Christ will be responsible to Him. God's government will be perfectly organized, devoid of useless red tape and excess baggage bureaucracies.

6. Will this divine government be permanent? Daniel 7:14-18.

COMMENT: No time or money will be wasted on campaigning and elections. There will be no politicians to cater to special organized groups or classes. In the world tomorrow God will appoint His resurrected saints as the rulers and educators, and no lobbyists or other pressure groups will be able to corrupt them.

There will be no insurrections, no rebellions--God can't be overthrown. Satan's failed coup proved that! Nor will any member of the God Family ever turn into another adversary (1 John 3:9). All members will have been proved in advance during their mortal lifetime.

7. Will the Spirit-born teachers in God's Family take a personal part in bringing about a full comprehension of God's law, and in directing people to take right action? Isaiah 30:20-21.

COMMENT: The sudden appearance of the spirit rulers, or a voice, as if from nowhere, will cause potential lawbreakers to freeze in the act. With proper guidance from Christ and with Satan's sinful influence restrained (Revelation 20:1-3), violence and crime will be stamped out.

8. How successful will the priest-teachers be in teaching the knowledge of God's way to the world? Jeremiah 31:34;Habakkuk 2:14;Isaiah 11:9.

9. Will God do more than merely make knowledge available? Compare Isaiah 25:6-7 with Isaiah 29:10-12 and Romans 11:7-8.(Notice the words "spread over all nations" in Isaiah 25:7.)

COMMENT: "And in this mountain"--the government of God--He will make the Millennium one great feast of rejoicing. The Feast of Tabernacles is the antitype!

God will destroy the covering of spiritual blindness that has hidden the truth from all nations. No religious confusion will long exist because Satan will have been restrained. Humans will then be teachable--their minds will be opened to God's revealed truth.

People will begin to live God's way of love--the way of giving and outgoing concern for others--the way of the true values--the way of peace, of happiness, of well-being, of joy and, ultimately, spiritual salvation. A World Free from Fear! In the millennial world pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, people will no longer have the influences of Satan and the false glitter of "this present evil world" to distract them from overcoming their human nature.

God's way will become the popular and broad way. It will be the way society will be going. People will want to follow God's way of life because of the happiness and joy they know it will bring.

Pressures in society that now urge people toward conformity with this present evil world will then be changed to working toward conformity with God's standard, toward overcoming human nature and building perfect, holy and righteous character.

1. When Christ has forcibly put down those who fill the earth with violence, will He abolish the fear of war? Isaiah 2:4.Will He do so by exercising supreme authority to rebuke many nations? Same verse.

COMMENT: Imagine! Never again any destruction of the fruit of years of labor! No more waste of human life! No young men drafted from their homes, their lives upset, to have their minds warped with hate!

2. Will there be any reason to fear that Christ will be a tyrannical ruler? Psalms 72:1-4,Psalms 72:8, Psalms 72:12-14; Isaiah 11:5.Will He make perfect decisions? Isaiah 11:2-3. Will the poor receive righteous judgment from Him? Isaiah 11:4.

3. Will there be any fear of wild animals? Hosea 2:18,first part; Isaiah 11:6-8;Ezekiel 34:25.What about wars--will the weapons of war be abolished from the earth? Hosea 2:18,last part.

COMMENT: There will be worldwide peace and people will convert their weapons of war into farming tools. The Millennium will be a time of peace that will extend even to the animal world.

4. In the secure, rejuvenated world tomorrow, will it be said to the fearful: "Be strong, fear not...God will...save you"? Isaiah 35:4.

5. Will God liberate people from the fear of sickness and disease? Isaiah 33:24;Jeremiah 30:17.Will the handicapped--both physically and mentally--be miraculously healed? Isaiah 35:3-6.

COMMENT: Education about true health and the miraculous healing of all sickness and disease will mean radiant health for everyone in the world tomorrow!

6. Will there be fear of accidents in the Millennium? Notice the principle of personal responsibility in Exodus 21:29,Exodus 21:33-34Exodus 22:6.

COMMENT: When God’s law goes forth from Zion (Isaiah 2:3), the principle of personal responsibility will be taught worldwide. People will be concerned about the welfare of others and will be their "brother’s keeper"!

There will be few accidents. But if someone should occasionally be careless--and God sometimes does allow an accident to teach a lesson--the miraculous healing power of Christ will be ever available.

7. Will fear and worry exist in the cities of tomorrow? Or will they be filled with radiantly happy families? Jeremiah 33:10-11;Zechariah 8:4-5.

COMMENT: People will no longer be afraid of their neighbors. They won’t have to worry about living next door to someone who is mentally unbalanced, a pervert or a killer. The old won’t have to fear being attacked and brutally beaten by some juvenile delinquent out looking for fun.

8. Will the fear of food shortages--a spectre that constantly haunts many areas of the world today--be gone? Ezekiel 34:26;Isaiah 30:23-24;Amos 9:13;Jeremiah 31:12.Will the old waste places be made fertile, and will beautiful forests spread in the Millennium? Isaiah 41:14-20;Isaiah 35:1-2,Isaiah 35:6-7.

COMMENT: Most of the earth’s land surface will become productive during the millennial age. Forests, agricultural areas and fish-filled lakes and streams will be found all over the world, with no more polluted rivers or ravaged landscapes.

9. Confusion of languages is one of the major barriers to cooperation between peoples. Will God give the whole world a pure language so all can serve Him with one accord? Zephaniah 3:9.

COMMENT: In the Millennium, Christ will usher in an era of worldwide literacy and education through a pure language. People everywhere will speak, read and write that same language.

10. What about the lack of confidence that plagues so many? Will those who really "know the Lord" dwell with confidence? Ezekiel 28:26.

COMMENT: Reeducation will take care of that. People won't be taught self-confidence, but confidence in Christ dwelling in them through the Holy Spirit.

11. What kind of fear will remain? Isaiah 59:19;Jeremiah 32:39-40.

COMMENT: This fear is not terror and misery, but the mature, sound-minded realization that disobeying the laws God has set in motion for our good leads to nothing but wretchedness, filth and deprivation. The Feast of Tabernacles was given that we might learn to fear God always (Deuteronomy 14:23). People will fear to disobey God, a right kind of fear that most people do not have in today's world.

Israel to Be God's Model Nation At His return, Christ will deliver the remnant of the descendants of ancient Israel, who will be made captive in the coming Great Tribulation. They will not be changed to immortality at Christ's return, but rather restored to the Promised Land as physical human beings.

David, who ruled as king over all the tribes of Israel during his mortal lifetime, will be resurrected to immortality. And as God promised, David will once again become Israel's king after God unites the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel.

1. Will the remnant of Israel that are alive at Christ's coming be eager to enter into a "perpetual covenant" with Him? Jeremiah 50:4-5.Will Christ's blood cleanse all Israel so that in living a converted, truly Christian life, this nation will reach the apex of joy and gladness and material prosperity? Jeremiah 33:7-9.

COMMENT: The return from captivity of a very few--mostly from Judah and Levi--did not fulfill the ultimate intent of this prophecy. They never attained great prosperity. Nor did they even approach the degree of wealth Israel possessed under David and Solomon. When this prophecy is fulfilled, "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26)!

During the Millennium, God will bestow upon obedient Israel all of the great material blessings He promised to give their ancestors had they obeyed (Leviticus 26:1-46; Deuteronomy 28:1-68). The British nations and the United States--the modern-day descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh--became the wealthiest and most powerful nations on earth in this end time (because of Abraham's obedience to God). But their recent status among nations is only a foretaste of even greater wealth and power (in God's service) to come once all of Israel is living in obedience to the government of God.

2. Abraham's offspring were prophesied to become extremely numerous (Genesis 13:16). Will Israel's population reach its zenith in the Millennium? Ezekiel 36:10-11;Isaiah 60:21-22.How does God describe this future explosive spread of Israelites into every part of the globe? Isaiah 27:6.

3. Will Israel inherit the whole earth? Isaiah 54:2-4.Thus will all nations be blessed because of Abraham's "seed"? Genesis 28:14.But how? Isaiah 61:9;Isaiah 62:1-2,7. Will the Gentiles therefore want to learn God's way and become obedient to Christ? Isaiah 2:1-3.

COMMENT: Israel was intended to be a blessing to the rest of the world both materially and spiritually. The Gentiles, too, will be blessed as they follow Israel's outstanding example of obedience to God! And they will also be blessed spiritually by becoming Abraham's "seed"--spiritual Israelites-- through Christ (Galatians 3:28-29), becoming Spirit-begotten and finally Spirit-born into the very Family of God. In the Millennium, the 12 tribes of Israel will for the first time become God's Model nation--the leaders all nations will want to follow! The Marriage of the Lamb

Let's now notice some interesting parallels that can be drawn between the Feast of Tabernacles and the coming "marriage supper" of Jesus Christ and His Spirit-born Church.

1. Will the marriage of the Lamb occur after Jesus Christ's return? Revelation 19:6-7.Will it be an occasion of great rejoicing? Same verses.

COMMENT: Notice how Christ's marriage is a time for great rejoicing after the war, darkness and trouble that will occur before Christ's return, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets!

2. In biblical pattern, how long does a marriage feast last? Judges 14:2,Judges 14:10-12. Does the Feast of Tabernacles span the same length of time? Leviticus 23:34.

COMMENT: The seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles are like the seven days of the ancient marriage feast and are a type of the marriage of Christ and His Bride the Church.

3. Like a wife bound to obey her husband as long as he lives, will the Bride of Christ obey Him forever? 1 Corinthians 7:39;Ephesians 5:22-27,Ephesians 5:32. Did Nehemiah read the law to the people every day of the Feast of Tabernacles? Compare Nehemiah 8:18 with Deuteronomy 31:10-11.

COMMENT: Those who in the Millennium will be added to the Bride of Christ must learn God's law in their life--and learn it well--so they can teach it to others in the world tomorrow.

4. Does Christ emphasize in the New Testament the necessity of an inner change, brought about by the Holy Spirit, to enable one to be ready for the marriage of the Lamb? Matthew 25:6-10.

5. Did ancient Israel, during the days of Moses, have the heart to fear and obey God? Deuteronomy 5:29;Deuteronomy 29:4.But when they receive the Holy Spirit, will it enable them to obey? Jeremiah 32:39-40.

COMMENT: The Sinaitic Covenant was a marriage agreement (Jeremiah 31:32). When Israel persistently broke the terms of the agreement--committed spiritual adultery--her sins divorced her from the One who later became Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 3:8,Jeremiah 3:14;Jeremiah 31:32;Isaiah 59:2.

God's true Church is composed of spiritually minded Israelites. A Gentile-born person can enter God's Church only by becoming a spiritual Israelite (Ephesians 2:11-18;Romans 4:16;Romans 9:4-5;John 4:22).

Christ will not marry another. He will remarry Israel--an Israel that is immortal and spiritual, not carnal, as at Sinai. Note that the Bride is- -before the marriage--called His "wife" (Revelation 19:7)in the sense that it is Israel again, only this time converted, righteous and spiritual.

Christ, the Lamb, is spirit. His wife must also become spirit, if it is to be a lasting congenial marriage. She will be a reborn, purified and cleansed Israel (2 Corinthians 11:2), who will have "made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

Spiritual Israel will be the rulers of the fleshly nation Israel. Israelites of the flesh who become qualified, as well as Gentiles, will be added to God’s ruling Family throughout the Millennium as they are born again. The entire 54th chapter of Isaiah describes spiritual Israel remarried to Christ, in contrast with the physical nation of Israel during the preceding 3,500 years. Notice especially the first six verses. The Church has been desolate--the truly converted few--until the making of the New Covenant, a marriage covenant. But fleshly Israel never multiplied as fast as the Church of converted Israel will multiply during the Millennium. The God Family is preparing for the greater things still in the future. The Millennium is only the beginning of eternity--of happiness, accomplishment and joy that will last forever. The Meaning of Booths The Feast of Tabernacles, besides being called the Feast of Ingathering, is sometimes called the Feast of Booths. That is because during the seven days of the Feast, the ancient Israelites were to live in booths. Let’s understand the significance of dwelling in booths and what it means for God’s people today.

1. Were God’s people to live in booths--that is, temporary dwellings-- during the Feast of Tabernacles? Leviticus 23:42.What is a booth? Leviticus 23:40.

COMMENT: A booth or tabernacle is a temporary dwelling. God commanded the ancient Israelites to live in temporary shelters made of tree branches while observing the Feast of Tabernacles. For God’s people who attend the Feast today in many different climates, tents, campers, motel or hotel rooms are appointed as temporary dwellings.

2. Was this manner of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles to be a continual reminder of Israel’s 40-year sojourn in the wilderness? Leviticus 23:42-43. Why? Was it because Israel lived in temporary dwellings during that time? Leviticus 23:43.

COMMENT: During their 40 years in the wilderness, the Israelites had no permanent dwellings. They were merely heirs to the land God had promised to give them--they were not yet inheritors.

3. Were Israel’s years of wandering in Sinai meant to be only a temporary state of affairs? Deuteronomy 8:2.Was it to last only until the rebellious generation was dead? Numbers 14:29,Numbers 14:33-34.

COMMENT: The rebellious generation in the wilderness is a type of all carnal, rebellious people. And the temporary dwellings typify the fact that humans even in the 1,000 years will be mortal, and that human life and society throughout the Millennium will be only temporary. What is permanent is eternal life.

4. Did the Israelites’ forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob also live in temporary dwellings as heirs, but not yet inheritors? Hebrews 11:9,Hebrews 11:13.

COMMENT: "Sojourn" is "a temporary stay." Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were strangers or aliens in the Promised Land, living in a temporary fashion all their days. They did not then receive the inheritance God had promised to give them. Their dwelling in "tabernacles" (booths) pictured that they were yet only heirs--not yet inheritors--of eternal life in God’s Kingdom and eternal possession of the land.

5. Are true Christians today "strangers and pilgrims" in this physical life? 1 Peter 2:11.

COMMENT: Like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God’s Spirit-begotten children are in the wilderness of this world, but are not of it (John 17:11,John 17:14). They are separate from the world (Revelation 18:4)--heirs, but not yet inheritors, of their permanent dwelling place, the promised Kingdom of God!

6. Did Peter, near the end of his life, compare his physical body to a temporary "tabernacle"? 2 Peter 1:14.

COMMENT: As mortal beings, made of the dust of the ground, humans are destined to die. Only by receiving God’s Spirit can a person hope to live forever. But Spirit-begotten Christians have the hope of eternal life abiding in them (1 John 5:11). Their physical bodies--with all their imperfections, their natural desires, their weaknesses, aches and pains--are meant to last only long enough for them to learn to serve God in this life. By staying in temporary dwellings each year during the Feast of Tabernacles, God’s people are reminded of this important knowledge. They understand that this physical life is only temporary--that they are merely pilgrims in this present life, waiting to inherit the Kingdom of God! With all this in mind, let’s now draw several further analogies, comparing Israel’s 40 years of wandering with the coming Millennium.

Just as ancient Israel, after escaping from Pharaoh--a type of Satan-- was given in the wilderness a temporary period of comparative isolation from Satan’s influence, so will the whole world enter 1,000 years of rest from Satan’s rule. During that 40 years Israel was welded into a nation organized under God’s government. During the Millennium, the whole world will be similarly organized under God’s government.

Forty is the number of trial and test. (See in any Bible concordance how often God’s people were tested for 40 days or 40 years.) Israel in the wilderness was a type of all people who will go through trials and tests in overcoming their human nature, even during the Millennium.

7. How will God draw the 1,000-year period of testing to a close? Revelation 20:3,Revelation 20:7-9.

8. Will a condition of permanency finally be reached in the plan revealed in God’s Holy Days of the seventh month? 1 Kings 8:2.

COMMENT: Ethanim means "[the month of] permanent things." Next month’s lesson will show how and when God’s plan leads to permanency--eternal inheritance instead of "sojourning."

9. After Christ returns and establishes the rule of the Kingdom of God on earth, will God’s Kingdom and government continue to expand? Isaiah 9:7.Also notice Matthew 13:33.

COMMENT: The government of God, like leaven in a lump of dough, will gradually spread throughout the whole earth in the Millennium. Eventually thousands of millions will be spiritually converted. The great harvest of humans, pictured by the autumn harvest in the Holy Land, will be gathered into the Kingdom of God--born again as divine members of the ruling Family of God during the Millennium. By the end of the 1,000 years, the Family of God will be ready for the final step in God’s Master Plan of salvation.

How God’s People Keep the Feast Now

1. Will Jerusalem again be chosen as the center of worship in the Millennium? Zechariah 2:12.Is Jerusalem not now the primary place for all people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles? John 4:21.

COMMENT: Jerusalem was rejected in the autumn of A.D. 66 and turned over to the Romans. God withdrew His name. But in the Millennium Jerusalem will again be the place where God’s people will keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

2. Does God intend for His people to be free from this world’s system and its ways? Revelation 18:4;2 Corinthians 6:14-18.Also notice Exodus 10:7Exodus 15:1,last part.

COMMENT: God intends the Feast of Tabernacles to separate and free His people from the world and its evil influences. This great festival gives them a special time and setting, in which they are free from the routine cares of the world, to think more about God’s purpose for life and how to attain it.

Living in temporary dwellings for an entire week--away from their everyday surroundings, jobs and most negative influences--God’s people picture by their observance of these seven days the universal freedom and peace that will exist when Satan is gone and the Spirit of God is available to every human (Joel 2:28,Joel 2:32).

3. Is the Feast of Tabernacles a time of rejoicing for the entire family? Deuteronomy 12:5-7,Deuteronomy 12:12;Deuteronomy 16:13-14.

COMMENT: Tens of thousands of God’s people and their families enthusiastically look forward annually to observing the Feast at dozens of sites around the world. It is the highlight of the entire year!

These are days of continuous, genuine Christian fellowship. Members and their families participate in various exciting, fun-filled Church-sponsored activities, as well as sight-seeing and other special attractions unique to each site. The sincere concern and fellowship, the spiritual nourishment and just plain good fun whets one’s appetite for the next year’s Feast, making the ordinary "vacations" of the past seem humdrum by comparison! But just as the Feast of Tabernacles is a physical feast filled with rejoicing, it is also a spiritual feast of education and preparation. Members of God’s Church receive instruction from God’s ministers through inspiring sermons to help them further prepare to rule and teach with Christ during the Millennium.

God’s people at the Feast demonstrate now, by the way they live together in harmony, what this entire world could be like if everyone followed God’s laws!

If you have not already read it, our free book The Wonderful World Tomorrow--What It Will Be Like provides additional understanding. Why not write for it? A Glimpse of Tomorrow’s World

"The lion and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." Isaiah 65:25

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." Isaiah 35:1

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Isaiah 2:2

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah 2:3

"They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Isaiah 65:22

"Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." Jeremiah 31:13

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:4

"For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." Zephaniah 3:9

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" Ezekiel 36:26

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21

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

"And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them." Ezekiel 34:27

"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. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isaiah 9:7

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Isaiah 11:6

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9 "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Zechariah 8:5

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall

waters break out, and streams in the desert. "And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." Isaiah 35:5-7

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. After Christ has returned to earth and deposed Satan, A. the 1,000-year reign of the Kingdom of God on earth will begin.

B. the firstfruits of God’s spiritual harvest--pictured by the festival of Pentecost--will join Christ in ruling the earth.

C. the great spiritual harvest of humans will begin.

D. All of the above.

2. The Feast of Tabernacles A. begins seven days after the Day of Atonement.

B. is the sixth of God’s seven annual Festivals picturing His plan of salvation.

C. concludes the spring harvest season in Palestine.

D. pictures the 1,000 years of desolation of the earth after Christ returns.

3. The New Testament Church of God taught A. throughout the Roman Empire the truth about the restoration of the government of God over the earth.

B. that God’s Master Plan was complete when the Church was established.

C. that the Roman Empire was the Kingdom of God.

D. nothing about the rule of Christ and the Spirit-born saints.

4. Which one of the following statements about the Feast of Tabernacles is FALSE?

A. The Feast begins with a Holy Day on which all ordinary work is forbidden.

B. It was also called the Feast of Ingathering.

C. The Feast lasts for a ful t days.

D. It pictures the future ingathering of the great harvest of Spirit-begotten humans during the Millennium.

5. Who decides where the Feast of Tabernacles is to be observed?

A. Individual members, who vote once a year.

B. God, who works through the government He has placed in His Church, leads those in charge to select appropriate sites.

C. Nothing is mentioned about this in the Bible.

D. None of the above.

6. Which one of the statements below is FALSE?

A. King Jeroboam, without God's approval, changed the date the Feast was to be observed.

B. The Israelites, and later the Jews, were transported into slavery because of their failure to keep the weekly and annual Sabbaths.

C. After their return from captivity, the remnant of Jews began to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

D. The ancient Israelites throughout their history faithfully kept the Feast in the way and manner God commanded.

7. The account in John 7:1-53 shows that A. Jesus kept the Feast of Tabernacles, even though faced with dangerous circumstances.

B. the Jews did not expect Jesus to be in Jerusalem to observe the Feast.

C. New Testament Christians do not need to keep the Feast.

D. Jesus' brothers and sisters did not keep the Feast.

8. In the Millennium, A. Gentile nations will not be required to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. observance of the Feast of Tabernacles will be optional.

C. nations that refuse to keep the Feast will first suffer from drought, and later plagues, until they submit to God.

D. Christ will abolish God's annual Holy Days.

9. God intends for His people to A. rejoice during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. save a second tithe (10th) of their income throughout the year to be spent in traveling to and attending the Feast.

C. experience during the Feast a foretaste of the prosperity, happiness and peace the whole world will enjoy.

D. All of the above.

10. When God's Holy Spirit is poured out freely in the Millennium, A. humans will have little desire to learn God's way of life.

B. people will begin to express outgoing love and concern for others.

C. there will be little change in the basic attitude or nature of humans.

D. None of the above.

11. The coming government of God will A. be a democracy similar to that in the United States today.

B. rule only over the 12 tribes of Israel.

C. be administered by Christ and the Spirit-born saints.

D. be only temporary.

12. The resurrected saints will A. have little to do with education in tomorrow's world.

B. educate as well as rule over people.

C. rule, but not educate in the Millennium.

D. always conduct their duties mysteriously and invisibly.

13. Worldwide obedience to God's law in the world tomorrow will A. result only in material blessings.

B. have no effect on world peace.

C. result only in spiritual blessings because God's law is spiritual.

D. result in universal peace, prosperity and happiness for 1,000 years.

14. The Spirit-born leaders in the Millennium will A. be appointed by Christ.

B. not have been tested and proved in advance during their mortal lifetime.

C. Be elected to their positions.

D. be susceptible to influence by lobbyists and special interest groups.

15. In the millennial world pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, people will A. be faced with many pressures to compromise with God's law.

B. worry about their physical needs.

C. no longer have the influence of Satan to contend with.

D. convert their farming tools into weapons of war.

16. Christ's government will A. provide true justice for all.

B. create fear and unhappiness.

C. enforce harsh laws.

D. not abolish the fear of war.

17. How will mankind be liberated from fear of sickness and disease in the Millennium?

A. Through doctors, who learn medicine through experimenting on animals.

B. Through miraculous healing and obedience to God’s health laws.

C. Christ will suspend the laws governing health.

D. Through "miraculous" drugs that will prevent illness.

18. Cities in the world tomorrow will be A. governed according to God’s law.

B. safe to walk in at night.

C. filled with radiantly happy families.

D. All of the above.

19. Which one of the following will NOT be true in the world tomorrow?

A. The whole earth will undergo remarkable changes--most of the land’s surface will become productive.

B. Material abundance will become commonplace because of widespread obedience to God’s law.

C. The earth will remain as it is today.

D. Christ will establish a pure language.

20. In the Millennium, the 12 tribes of Israel will A. for the first time become God’s model nation--the leaders all nations will soon want to emulate.

B. not accept Christ’s rule over them.

C. refuse to enter into a "perpetual covenant" with Christ.

D. have a relatively minor influence in world affairs.

21. With whom will Christ enter a marriage agreement at His return?

A. The physical descendants of ancient Israel who are alive at His coming.

B. Spiritual Israel--which will have "made herself ready."

C. All nations.

D. He will rule all nations but will marry no one.

22. During the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, God’s people A. are to live in temporary accommodations such as motel and hotel rooms.

B. rejoice greatly, thus picturing the universal happiness and joy that will exist during the Millennium.

C. receive instruction from God’s Word to help them further prepare to rule and teach in the Millennium.

D. All of the above.

23. Staying in temporary dwellings--"booths"--during the Feast A. has no special meaning.

B. was not intended to remind Israel of their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness.

C. is to remind us that, this physical life is only temporary--that God’s people are merely pilgrims in this present life, waiting to inherit the Kingdom of God.

D. does not typify the fact that human life and society throughout the Millennium will be temporary.

24. Which one of the statements below is FALSE?

A. The Apostle Peter did not compare his physical body to a temporary "tabernacle" (2 Peter 1:14).

B. True Christians are "strangers and pilgrims" in this physical life (1 Peter 2:11).

C. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were heirs--not yet inheritors--of God’s promises to them (Hebrews 11:9-13).

D. God’s Spirit-begotten children are in the wilderness of this world, but are not of it (John 17:11-14).

25. God intends the Feast of Tabernacles to A. separate and free His people from the evil influences of the world.

B. give His people a special time and setting to think more about the purpose of life and how to attain it.

C. be a time of rejoicing for the entire family.

D. All of the above.

Lesson 31

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 31

1987

_____

LAST GREAT DAY _____ God’s Master Plan Completed!

Untold millions have died without ever having had an opportunity for salvation. God’s seventh and final Holy Day reveals when and how they will have their day of salvation.

WHY have countless millions died without ever having had an opportunity to understand the purpose of life and to be saved?

Even today the vast majority of people have not heard Christ’s true Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God. And of those who have heard it, most have not understood that message--because Satan has deceived them (Revelation 12:9). Think of it!--even they have not really had an opportunity to understand or to be saved! Are they all, through no fault of their own, "lost" forever, condemned to the lake of fire?

Absolutely not!

Shocking as it may sound, God does not intend for everyone to understand His truth at this time! If He wanted everyone to understand at this time, everyone would understand!

God, in that sense, is responsible for having allowed the vast majority of humanity to be blinded by Satan to His truth. It is God’s purpose and plan that, until Christ returns, only those He specially calls (John 6:44,John 6:65) will understand.

Ancient Peoples Yet to Be Saved

Jesus severely criticized some of the Galilean cities in which He had performed many miracles: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matthew 11:21,New King James). But the people of Tyre and Sidon had not repented of their idolatry. Are they, as some Christian denominations teach, eternally condemned? If God had sent Jesus in earlier ages to them, they would have repented. But God didn’t send Jesus to them. God allowed them to be punished by the Babylonians and, later, the Persians and Greeks. Why? Wasn’t God trying to save them?

Jesus also admonished the city of Capernaum: "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:23).

Because of their grievous sins, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone (Genesis 19:24-25). Some Christian denominations seem anxious to condemn them to eternal punishment. Yet Jesus said that if He had performed miracles in those cities, they would not have been destroyed. The people would have repented. Is God fair? Yes. God knows that the people of Tyre, Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah had not been sent a prophet to warn them. They will be given a future opportunity to see Jesus' mighty works; they will have an opportunity to repent; and they will have an opportunity to be saved!

God Is Fair

God is a perfect combination of love and justice (1 John 4:16;Isaiah 11:2-4). He punishes at particular periods in history the wicked for their sins. But what of the millions of people for whom Christ died, yet who-- through no fault of their own--did not know of God's provision to offer them salvation at a later time? How will they learn of salvation? The answer is revealed in the final step in God's Master Plan--pictured by the seventh and final Holy Day.

After Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, He will then begin to teach the way of salvation to millions. As we learned in our last lesson, all those born during the Millennium will have their opportunity to understand God's truth and be born into His Family during the Millennium. But what about the thousands of millions who have already died without ever hearing or understanding the way of salvation?

After the Millennium, they will be resurrected to mortal life and given their opportunity to understand God's truth, to be begotten by God's Spirit, to grow in His character, and to become spirit-composed members of His ruling Family.

God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Everyone will ultimately be given an opportunity to receive salvation! God is absolutely fair!

Just as the week is not complete without the seventh-day Sabbath, God's Master Plan is not complete without His seventh and final annual festival-- the Last or Final Great Day. The number seven in the Bible indicates completion and perfection. This seventh festival of God reveals the perfection of God's great Master Plan-- that God's love and mercy toward mankind will extend beyond the Millennium. In this lesson you will see God's perfect justice and mercy on all those who have not yet had their opportunity for salvation. To understand this final phase of God's plan, let's learn about the last of God's annual Holy Days, symbolizing the Last Great Judgment Day!

LESSON 31 God's Final Harvest Festival

1. Did God command His people to observe an eighth day of worship immediately after the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles? Leviticus 23:34-36,Leviticus 23:39. Are God's people to keep this eighth day as a separate festival, distinct from the Feast of Tabernacles? Leviticus 23:39-42.

COMMENT: The last annual Sabbath or Holy Day is observed immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. It was therefore associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and was called "the eighth day." It is clearly a separate festival and Holy Day. Because the eighth day is the final annual Holy Day, it came to be known among Christians as the Last or Final Great Day.

2. How long are God’s people to continue keeping this annual festival? Verse 41. In the days of Solomon, did Israel keep the feast of the eighth day? 2 Chronicles 7:8-10.

COMMENT: To celebrate the dedication of the new Temple, King Solomon held a special seven-day feast from the eighth to the 14th of the seventh month. (Of course, their feasting would have been interrupted by the Day of Atonement, the 10th of the month.) The people then celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days--the 15th through the 21st. On the 22nd, they observed the last or eighth day. After that annual Sabbath, the people returned to their homes.

3. After God allowed the children of Israel to be taken into captivity for neglecting His Sabbaths and forgetting His Holy Days, some of the people were permitted to return to Judea. Under Ezra and Nehemiah, did these people learn that God’s Holy Days were not complete until the eighth day was observed? Nehemiah 8:14-18.

COMMENT: Note the words, "according unto the manner." The eighth day was kept according to the manner written in Leviticus 23:36.

Jesus’ Example

Jesus taught His disciples to follow His example and to teach others to do likewise. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

1. Did Jesus observe the Feast of Tabernacles? John 7:2,John 7:8-10. Did He know that the Holy Day cycle was not complete until the eighth day of the Feast had been observed? John 7:37. What did Jesus speak about on this final Holy Day? John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: Jesus spoke this on the eve of the Last Great Day, after the traditional water-pouring ceremony, which occurred on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus was not talking about physical thirst. He was revealing that if any man have spiritual thirst, and believes on Him, he can come to the Christ and drink in the Holy Spirit. But, as Jesus made clear in John 6:44,no one can come to or believe on Him unless the Father draws or calls that person. The few whom God calls in this age have access to God’s Spirit now. But for the vast majority, the fulfillment of Jesus’ words must wait until the spiritual fulfillment of the Last Great Day.

Meaning of Last Great Day

1. Does God eventually want to call and save everyone? 2 Peter 3:9;1 Timothy 2:4.Will everyone be saved at the same time, or is there a definite time-order or sequence? 1 Corinthians 15:22-24.Is it possible to be saved in any way except through Jesus Christ? John 3:16-17;John 10:9,John 10:1; Acts 4:12;1 Timothy 2:5-6.

COMMENT: Even as all men die, the same all will be made alive through Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22). Everyone who has ever lived and died will be resurrected--first Christ was resurrected, then later the saints who lived before Christ’s Second Coming will be resurrected at His return. But what about the vast majority who were not Christ’s? Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:24 includes them all in "the end"--when Christ completes His job of conquering every enemy (1 Corinthians 15:25). That will happen after the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10).

Those who have not heard or understood God’s truth have not been irrevocably condemned to eternal death. They have not sinned willfully. They have not had a chance! Even if they lived up to the best they knew while alive, the Bible teaches that there is only one way to salvation-- through belief in Christ and spiritual conversion and growth as defined in the Bible.

Most of our loved ones who have died "unsaved" did not die eternally lost. They most likely were not called during this age, but their call will come later. After the Millennium they will be resurrected to mortal life and given spiritual understanding and the opportunity to become members of God’s Family.

2. Did Paul understand that the Israelites, and mankind in general, were spiritually blinded? Romans 10:16,Romans 10:18-21. Although these Israelites heard God’s truth, they did not obey it. Was this because God had purposely allowed their blindness? Romans 11:8,Romans 11:25, Romans 11:32. Yet, did Paul know that they would have a future opportunity to receive salvation? Romans 11:26.

COMMENT: When will this resurrection be? The book of Revelation reveals the sequence of prophecy. Let’s examine it to learn when the unsaved dead will be raised and offered salvation. Let’s learn the meaning of the Last Great Day.

3. Does the Bible speak of a "first" resurrection, implying that there will be more than one resurrection? Revelation 20:5,last part. When will the second resurrection occur? Same verse, first part.

COMMENT: These are not "the dead in Christ," but simply the dead--those millions who are not Christ’s--who have not been converted, who have not heard the Gospel or understood it. The sentence, "This is the first resurrection," refers to the resurrection to immortal life of the firstfruits of God’s plan, which will occur at Christ’s return, just before the 1,000-year period begins (Revelation 20:4, Revelation 20:6). But notice the first sentence in Revelation 20:5 : "But the rest of the dead [those who have not yet had an opportunity to understand God’s truth] lived not again [would not come up in a resurrection] until the thousand years were finished." This resurrection, which will occur after the 1,000 years, is the second resurrection. It will be a resurrection to mortal life.

4. All during the Millennium, Satan will be restrained, prevented from deceiving the nations (Revelation 20:1-3). After the 1,000 years are over, will Satan be loosed out of his prison? Revelation 20:7. Will he go out to deceive all the humans who are not then born into God’s Kingdom? Revelation 20:8-9. What will then happen to Satan? Revelation 20:10.

COMMENT: This will prove, for anyone who might doubt, that Satan will not repent, even after he sees the wonderful results of 1,000 years of righteous rule. The humans who are so easily deceived into fighting Christ will also be proving that they weren’t paying attention to what they were being taught at the close of the 1,000 years.

Satan and the demons will then be cast into the lake of fire. Some Bibles use italics to show that the word are in Revelation 20:10 was added by the translators. It is not found in the Greek manuscripts. The phrase should read, "where the beast and the false prophet were cast." The unwritten verb in the Greek should be understood to be in the same tense as the verb in the first half of the sentence. The Amplified Bible has it correct. The beast and false prophet will be cast

into a lake of fire at the beginning of the Millennium (Revelation 19:20). These two mortal men will be killed and consumed by that fire, and by the time Satan is cast into that fire, the beast and false prophet will have been dead more than 1,000 years. In the lake of fire, Satan will be able to do nothing. God will have rendered him completely powerless--unable to deceive the rest of the dead, who will then be resurrected to have their opportunity to understand God's Master Plan.

Great White Throne Judgment

1. What will happen after Satan's final rebellion and punishment? Revelation 20:11-12.Who are the people resurrected in this Great White Throne Judgment? Revelation 20:12. Also notice Daniel 7:9-10.

COMMENT: The dead who stand before God couldn't include true Christians today, because they will appear before Christ and receive their rewards at the first resurrection, when Christ returns. Nor are the dead referred to in the above verses those converted during the Millennium, because they will have already inherited God's Kingdom during the 1,000 years, after living a normal life span.

Revelation 20:11-12 refers to the second resurrection--a resurrection to mortal life for all those who died in spiritual ignorance in past ages. Their time of salvation will then occur!

2. Who will be resurrected in this Last Great Judgment? Matthew 11:21-24.Will all of these people rise in a time of judgment? Matthew 12:41-42.

COMMENT: Jesus spoke of a time of judgment when those ancient peoples would be given an opportunity to understand what He had been preaching to the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. They, too, will hear the good news!

Christ mentioned the people of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom, Nineveh in Jonah's time and the Queen of the South. All of these examples of people who lived in different generations are compared to those who lived in the cities and towns of Jesus' day, the vast majority of whom did not understand or believe His message. Jesus tells us that they will all be resurrected with the generation that lived during His time!

Jesus gave enough examples of people living at widespread times to prove that most of humanity will be brought back to life at the same time on this earth. There will be pre-Flood men and women, all 12 tribes of Israel, those who lived during the Middle Ages and the vast majority living now.

Even babies and children who died untimely deaths will be resurrected then. They will all rise in the second resurrection because they had not been called by God during their first lifetime. This group includes all people of all times except those who will have already been born of God, and those relatively few people who already had their opportunity to receive eternal life, but deliberately rejected it and sinned willfully. Those few will be resurrected in the third and final resurrection, and they will be destroyed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13-15).

3. Did the prophet Ezekiel describe a resurrection of dead Israelites back to mortal life? Ezekiel 37:11-13.Is this clearly a resurrection to physical life--do the bodies have flesh, skin and bones, and require air to live? Ezekiel 37:5-9.

4. Will God give His Spirit to these millions of people? Ezekiel 37:14. Will the Gentiles also be resurrected and return to their "former estate"? Ezekiel 16:55.

COMMENT: Israel is a type of all nations. Ezekiel's prophecies describe a time when both Israelites and Gentiles who died in spiritual ignorance will be given an opportunity to receive salvation.

5. Does the Apostle Paul explain to Gentiles that until they are called to salvation through Christ, they are without hope of eternal life? Ephesians 2:11-12.Is God willing to overlook sins done in ignorance? Acts 17:30.But once spiritual understanding of God's Master Plan is made available, what is His command? Same verse.

What Is Judgment?

1. Who will be the Chief Judge in the Last Great Judgment? Daniel 7:9-10;Psalms 9:7;John 5:21-22;Acts 10:42.Will the saints judge with Him? 1 Corinthians 6:2.

2. How will the judgment of this great multitude be accomplished? Romans 2:6-11;Ecclesiastes 12:13-14;2 Corinthians 5:10.Will they be judged by the Word of God--the Bible--in accordance with what they will do after they are resurrected to mortal life? Daniel 7:10;Revelation 20:12.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word translated "books" in Daniel 7:10 corresponds to the Greek word translated "books" in Revelation 20:12.This Greek word is biblia, and it is from this word that the English word bible is derived. The books that will be opened are the books of the Bible! They will be opened to the understanding of thousands of millions of people--everyone who was unable to know and understand God's purpose and plan for them during their previous lifetime because they had not been called by the Father and given His Spirit of understanding.

Some, assuming that "judgment" means only the pronouncing of a sentence based on past behavior, have thought that these people, even if they repented, could do nothing to change their fate. Thankfully, God is merciful, always willing to forgive upon true repentance.

Let's better understand what the Bible means when it uses the word judgment.

3. Are true Christians today already being judged by God? 1 Peter 4:17.Is this judgment so that they might avoid condemnation? 1 Corinthians 11:32.

COMMENT: God judges His children today by evaluating how well they live by His written Word. Their rewards in God's Kingdom will depend on their character development during their mortal life. It is a process requiring time and opportunity for learning and growth.

Those resurrected after the Millennium will be judged the same way. They, like Spirit-begotten Christians today, will be given enough time to prove they are willing to live God's way through a life of overcoming and obedience to God. In this period of judgment after the 1,000 years, not only will the Bible be opened, but the Book of Life will also be opened. These people will be given an opportunity to receive eternal life! God, in perfect fairness, will give them an opportunity for salvation, just as He gives to those He calls now. But, in this last great judgment, people will not be subject to Satan's influence as we are today, because Satan will have been put away (Revelation 20:10). With God's Spirit freely available, and freed from Satan's spiritual influences, they will be

given their one and only opportunity for salvation through repentance, baptism, receiving God's Spirit and growing in godly character during a second mortal life. They, like Christians today, will be required to act on the knowledge God will give them, to choose righteousness as defined by God's spiritual law, to quit breaking that law.

Those who continue to live God's way of life will be changed from mortality to immortality at the end of this period of judgment.

Those people who were born to physical life first--many before the First Coming of Jesus Christ and even those born before the Flood--have not yet had the opportunity to participate in God's plan. Their chance is coming, but they will be called last--in the Last Great Judgment.

Those now being called into God's Church, although born later, are being given their opportunity as God's firstfruits (James 1:18). Even people born during the Millennium will be called to participate in God's plan before the vast majority of mankind, who have lived in this first 6,000 years of human experience. Referring to this age, Jesus said: "The last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16). The Last Great Day pictures the completion of God's Master Plan--the Great White Throne Judgment period after the Millennium. Revelation 20:5 shows that a second resurrection will occur after the Millennium, and Revelation 20:11-12 reveal that those in this resurrection, who died not having been called to participate in God's plan of salvation, will then be given their opportunity to become members of God's divine Family.

Vast Majority to Be Saved

1. Isaiah envisioned the final days of the judgment period when the resurrected billions will receive their call to participate in God's plan. How does he describe it? Isaiah 65:20-25.

2. Are these resurrected multitudes counted among God's elect--made participants in His Master Plan, and given the opportunity to enter God's Family? Isaiah 65:22-23. Will they then have a close relationship with God the Father? Isaiah 65:24.

COMMENT: Imagine, if you can, the astonishment of those resurrected at the beginning of this period of judgment. Each person will be in his first moment of consciousness since death. At first, some may think they are in heaven, hell or purgatory. Most will simply be confused--bewildered.

Nothing that many had been taught about an afterlife will turn out to be true. Faced with undeniable evidence that their old teachings and ways were false, they will be more willing to start over and be taught the truth. Untold millions who have not had any religious teaching whatsoever will start learning from scratch. Who will teach these thousands of millions? Millions of teachers who will have been born into God's Family in the first resurrection and during the Millennium!

Those resurrected to mortal life will then undergo a process of conversion similar to that of Spiritbegotten Christians today. They will be taught God's laws, and will learn they are guilty of sin and deserving of the death penalty.

They will learn of God's mercy, and that Christ paid the penalty for them, if they will accept His payment. The vast majority will repent.

Upon repentance and faith in Christ as their personal Savior, they will be forgiven and God’s Spirit will be given to them. Then they, as Spiritbegotten children of God, can begin growing spiritually--developing God’s holy, righteous and perfect character within them.

Unlearning all the falsehoods learned in their first life and learning God’s true ways will take time. And building character will take time, because character can be developed only through time and experience.

3. How long will this period of judgment last? Isaiah 65:20.

COMMENT: This verse strongly indicates that those resurrected then will live for 100 years, no matter how old they were when they died. Further, it indicates that the child (of God) will, at the end of this period, be changed--the fleshly cells of the body will die as the person puts on immortality. (This death of the physical cells of the body also occurs to Christians who are alive at Christ’s Second Coming. They, too, die--but do not sleep the sleep of death; they are in the "twinkling of an eye" changed to immortality.) The wicked sinner at the end of the 100 years will be under a curse--will die in the lake of fire.

During this time Christ and the resurrected saints will rule. The earth will be as peaceful and productive as during the Millennium. Children who died in the first 6,000 years will live again for 100 years, building character through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Older people who died without knowing God’s plan will also be resurrected to live for 100 more years. The ancient peoples Jesus mentioned in Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50 would have repented if He had come to them in their day (Matthew 11:21). And they will repent and be given God’s Spirit when resurrected into a world that has been personally ruled by Jesus Christ for 1,000 years! Your Bible shows that the vast majority of those who have ever lived will finally be born into God’s Family at the end of their coming period of judgment. God’s Master Plan of salvation for all mankind will then be complete.

Then the spirit-composed members of God’s great ruling Family can look forward to new heavens and a new earth--and to new and wonderful opportunities in ruling the universe under God our Father and Jesus Christ our elder brother!

How wonderful and reassuring is the truth of our all-wise, loving and merciful Creator God!

Satan Has His Counterfeit Religious Holidays

Satan has blinded the world to the spiritual truth you have just studied. The natural mind does not like God’s laws, nor His Holy Days (Romans 8:7). Therefore even religious men, invisibly influenced by the god of this world, have created substitutes for God’s festivals. They may have been sincere in doing so, but they were deceived!

Let’s learn what God says about today’s false religious traditions.

1. Did Christ instruct His apostles to observe His birth and resurrection, or just the opposite--to commemorate the date of His death? Luke 22:8,Luke 22:13-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

COMMENT: God’s commanded days are ignored by most professing Christians. Instead, the biggest religious days of modern Christianity are Christmas and Easter--neither of which is

commanded!

2. What does the Bible reveal about weather and farming conditions surrounding the time of year when Christ was born? Luke 2:6-8,especially Luke 2:8.

COMMENT: Many encyclopedias and other historical sources point out that Christ's birth could not have occurred in the month of December. The shepherds in Judea always brought their flocks in from the mountainsides and fields and corralled them no later than mid-October! They did this to protect the sheep and themselves from the cold rains that followed. The Bible itself shows that winter in Judea is the rainy season (Song of Solomon 2:11).

Encyclopedias and other reference works all show that the exact date of Christ's birth is unknown. If Jesus Christ had intended for us to celebrate His birthday, then He would have commanded that it be done and He would have revealed the exact date in the Bible. But He did not.

Since Jesus was not even born in December, what about the various customs and traditions associated with Christmas? Many have assumed that they stem from Christian origins. But Christmas customs and practices originated long before Christ! According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedate the Christian period--a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition" (article, "Christmas," 15th edition).

3. A common custom during the Christmas holiday season is to cut down an evergreen tree and decorate it. Does the prophet Jeremiah make reference to such a practice occurring during his time--hundreds of years before Christ? Jeremiah 10:2-5.Whose custom was this? Jeremiah 10:2-3.

COMMENT: The Bible clearly shows it was an ancient custom to cut down trees, decorate or carve them, and put them in their homes! God clearly commanded His people not to learn that way or follow it.

4. What is found in the Bible regarding the observance of "Easter"? Acts 12:4.

COMMENT: This is the only verse in the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible where the word Easter is mentioned. However, as any authority of the Greek language knows, it is a flagrant mistranslation! The original Greek word here is pascha, meaning Passover. In every other place in the New Testament where pascha is used, it is always translated Passover. Examples of this can be found in Matthew 26:2,Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12 and 1 Corinthians 5:7.Virtually all other translations of the Bible correctly render pascha as Passover in Acts 12:4.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers.... The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals [that is, God's--Leviticus 23:1-2], though in a new spirit, as commemoration of events which those festivals had foreshadowed" ("Easter," 11th edition).

Another reason why "Easter Sunday" could not have been celebrated by the early Christian Church may be found in the fact that Christ was not resurrected on a Sunday morning.

5. What did Jesus say about the length of time He would be in the grave? Matthew 12:39-40;Mark 8:31.Did He fulfill that sign "as he said"? Matthew 28:6.

COMMENT: The only sign Christ gave to prove He was the Messiah was the length of time, following His death, that He would be buried--a period of three days and three nights, or 72 hours. But according to the Easter tradition, Christ was crucified Friday afternoon and resurrected Sunday morning--a period of only a day and a half, or 36 hours!

Since Christ did fulfill His sign, the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition is just that--a tradition and not a fact! If you have not read the facts that prove Jesus was crucified and buried on a Wednesday, and rose from the dead 72 hours later--late Saturday afternoon--write for our free booklet The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday! And what about the various customs and traditions associated with Easter? Most assume that the customs of this religious holiday came from "Christian" origins. Easter and its customs date long before the resurrection of Jesus. Similar ceremonies were observed nearly 2,000 years before the beginning of the Christian era!

"Easter" is actually a slightly changed English spelling of the name of the ancient Assyrian goddess Ishtar. It was pronounced by the Assyrians as we pronounce Easter today. The traditions associated with Easter, such as colored eggs, the Easter bunny and sunrise services, are pre-Christian and pagan in origin!

6. A traditional custom of Easter today is to attend an Easter sunrise service. Does the prophet Ezekiel make reference to a similar practice occurring during his time--more than 500 years before the birth of Jesus? Ezekiel 8:16.Does God approve of this custom? Ezekiel 8:15-17.

COMMENT: It was an ancient heathen custom to gather at sunrise and worship the rising sun. Such services were being observed in Ezekiel’s day by the nation of Judah. They had "borrowed" some of the heathen customs, in spite of God’s command not to follow pagan practices in worshipping Him!

However, many who understand that Christmas and Easter evolved from pagan customs originally honoring pagan gods will say that they observe these days and these customs to "honor" Christ.

7. What does God warn about learning and following the customs and traditions of the heathen? Deuteronomy 12:29-31;Jeremiah 10:2.

COMMENT: God plainly commands His people not to adopt the practices of pagan nations. God will not accept this kind of worship, even though intended in His honor! God cannot be honored by disobedience.

8. Did Christ say it is possible to worship Him and still do it in vain? Matthew 15:9.What did He tell the scribes and Pharisees about following man’s ideas on how to worship God? Mark 7:7-9.

COMMENT: God does not want people trying to honor Christ by following traditions and customs devised by men. Notice again God’s command, "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way" (Deuteronomy 12:31,New King James).

If you would like to know more about the origins of Christmas and Easter and the customs associated with these holidays, request The Plain Truth About Christmas and The Plain Truth

About Easter. Both booklets are free for the asking. The Third Resurrection

God Almighty, in His wisdom, has devised the best possible way for men of all times and nations to receive salvation and inherit eternal life in His Family.

God's Master Plan is so simple and effective that the overwhelming majority of mankind will eventually repent of all sin and turn gratefully to God, submitting to His guidance and government. But salvation is not universally guaranteed.

Out of all the earth's population, a few people will fail in God's plan. They will fail because they stubbornly insist on their own way--the way of death (Proverbs 14:12). They persist in living rebellious, sinful lives, making themselves and those around them miserable.

1. Will those whom God has called to receive the knowledge of salvation be given a second chance if they sin willfully? Hebrews 10:26-29;Hebrews 6:4-6.To receive this punishment, was it first necessary for them to have known God's truth? Hebrews 10:26.

COMMENT: God will forgive any sin that is repented of--even if, through weakness, temptation or habit, the sin is repeated. As long as a person's intention, attitude and desire is to obey God, he will repent, and God will forgive him (1 John 1:9). Jesus said we ought to forgive 70 times seven times (Matthew 18:21-22). God is even more willing to forgive than that! So what is a willful or an unforgivable sin?

If a person has been given spiritual understanding of God's way and has experienced the blessings of that way, but decides he no longer wants it, changes his attitude, deliberately chooses a life of rebellion, despising God's laws, then his sin is unforgivable because he will not repent of it! God will not give eternal life to anyone who insists on living Satan's way.

Such people have been specially called by God and given His Spirit, yet at some point in time they purposely, knowingly rejected it! Perhaps through bitterness, refusal to forgive others, or neglect of prayer and Bible study, they stopped allowing God to build His character in them.

Like the servant who did nothing with his talent (Matthew 25:24-30), some failed in God's purpose for them. They became so calloused to their negligence and their sins that no matter what God could do to try to correct them, they will never want to repent.

God gives everyone all the help, encouragement and opportunity for success they need to inherit eternal life. God will never quit helping anyone! But these people have quit on God! They show by their actions that they don't really want eternal life in God's Family--and so God, in love, will not give it to them. To guarantee peace, prosperity, happiness and success throughout all eternity, God can't allow these selfish people to make life miserable for others around them. Although God certainly has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:31-32), these sinful people must be put out of the way. They must not be allowed to make themselves and others unhappy any longer. Let's understand what will happen to them after the Great White Throne Judgment period.

2. After 100 years of testing, will those few who remain stubbornly rebellious be accursed? Isaiah 65:20.What does the Apostle John see happening immediately after the final period of testing is over? Revelation 20:13-15.

COMMENT: This is the third resurrection. It will occur after all who can be saved are saved. All of the wicked who have knowingly rejected God’s way and died in their sins will be raised to physical life. Their attitudes will be evident. No one will ever claim these people were unjustly condemned. None of them will repent. They will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their penalty--extinction in the lake of fire. This will be their second death. They will never again be resurrected.

3. Will all who stubbornly refuse to repent and who persist in breaking God’s commandments ultimately find themselves in a lake of "fire and brimstone"? Revelation 21:8;Daniel 12:2;Malachi 4:1-3.

COMMENT: Jesus said that the fate of the wicked is gehenna fire (Mark 9:43-48). Gehenna fire and the lake of fire are the same. This fire will have the appearance of a fiery lake.

Mortals naturally die once, because we just "wear out" (Hebrews 9:27). But if anyone dies the second death after the 100-year period, he will have been judged by God and Christ to be guilty of persistent disobedience and incorrigible rebellion. The second death will be for all eternity!

After the Great White Throne Judgment period, everyone will have had full opportunity to prove themselves. The vast majority will have yielded themselves to God, and will have received God’s gift of eternal life. Hundreds of thousands who qualified for responsibilities in the Kingdom of God before Christ’s Second Coming, thousands of millions who qualified for similar responsibilities during His 1,000-year reign on earth, and billions who qualified during the 100-year judgment period will be members of God’s spiritual Family. The much smaller number of unrepentant rebellious will meet their Judge in the third resurrection. Their temporary human life will be terminated. The lake of fire will consume them "body and soul," their wicked works and ultimately the entire surface of the world.

Only those who received spiritual life will escape this global destruction, in which all that is fleshly--corruptible--will perish. All that will remain of the wicked and their world will be ashes under the feet of the Spirit-born children of God.

4. To what historical event does the Apostle Peter compare this final world-consuming lake of fire? 2 Peter 3:5-7,2 Peter 3:10-12. Did God destroy the ungodly men and society during the time of Noah? Genesis 6:12-13.But did God save righteous Noah and his family? Genesis 6:9, Genesis 6:18, Genesis 6:22; Genesis 7:1.

5. Did John the Baptist foretell a coming baptism in fire? Matthew 3:11.

COMMENT: Baptism means immersion, and the baptism with fire will be an immersion in fire. Just as the world before Noah was "baptized"--submerged in water--so the end-time world will be "baptized" with fire when God’s Master Plan is complete. The earth, befouled by sin, will be cleansed of all defilement in the baptism of fire.

New Heavens and New Earth

1. After all of God’s children are born into His spiritual Family, and all sinners have been destroyed, what will God do next? Isaiah 65:17-19;Revelation 21:1,Revelation 21:5; 2 Peter 3:13.

COMMENT: After the lake of fire, a new heaven and a new earth will appear. The new earth will become the headquarters for all future creating projects of the God Family. Let’s glimpse this new project God has promised to begin.

2. Will the new Jerusalem come down out of heaven to the earth, and become the capital of the universe? Revelation 21:2.Will God the Father join Jesus Christ on earth with His spirit-composed children? Revelation 22:3-5.

COMMENT: God the Father will not come to dwell on earth before the cleansing of the world in the lake of fire. After the earth is purified, God will establish His headquarters and throne on earth, in a new and perfectly built Jerusalem.

3. Will God share this new city with His spiritual children? Isaiah 66:22.Who will live in the holy city and have a part with God and Jesus Christ in the refurbishing of the universe? Revelation 22:14.

4. What will the holy city be like? Revelation 21:10-25.How large will it be? Revelation 21:15-17.

COMMENT: The new Jerusalem will be about 1,400 miles (2,200 kilometers) in each direction. It will cover an area equal to the modern nations of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia combined!

5. Will rivers of living waters be available in the new Jerusalem? Revelation 22:1-2.

God’s Days Are Full of Meaning

Let’s briefly summarize the meaning of God’s seven annual festivals. They picture God’s plan of redemption or salvation--the divine plan by which God is reproducing Himself. The Passover pictures the death of Christ, the Lamb of God, in payment for the penalty of human sins that are repented of. The seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread picture the Church coming out of sin, even as Israel came out of Egypt. The day of Pentecost, originally called Feast of Firstfruits, pictures the Church as the first to be begotten and born as children of God during the Church age. The Feast of Trumpets pictures the Second Coming of Christ to take over earth’s throne and to rule all nations. The Day of Atonement pictures the putting away of Satan. The seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles picture the 1,000-year reign of Christ and the Spirit-born children of God. The Last or Final Great Day pictures the final judgment, when salvation will be made available to all those who never had an opportunity in their first life.

God’s festival days, unlike the holidays of man, have tremendous significance.

What we want to remember, we must continually review. As true Christians observe each annual festival and Holy Day in season, we are reminded of God’s Master Plan and our individual part in it.

God’s annual Holy Days give us the opportunity to "act out" God’s plan each year. By doing this, our goal is constantly kept in front of our minds. It is renewed for us because we are symbolically "reliving" it every year.

God Almighty, in His loving mercy, has revealed this wonderful knowledge. To achieve the purpose for which we were born, we must--either now or later--keep the Holy Days that point out that purpose. What we do with this knowledge is up to us.

Those who believe God’s Word will want to meet--in obedience to God’s command found in Hebrews 10:24-25--with brethren of like understanding on God’s annual Holy Days.

If you are yielded to God’s inspired Word and have repented of your old ways, if you sincerely want to keep God’s annual Holy Days where He has placed His name, then you may write to our office nearest you for further information. The seven annual festivals identified in the chart below depict the steps in God’s Master Plan of salvation for mankind. They show just how loving and merciful our Creator God truly is. If you would like to know when God’s annual festivals take place this year, request a copy of the calendar we have prepared. It is attractive and informative. You will want to hang your copy on the wall or keep it in a handy location for easy reference. Be sure to send for a copy today.

---------- FESTIVAL | OBSERVED | MEANING | SCRIPTURES ---------- Passover |14th day of |A memorial of the | Leviticus 23:5 |first month, |sacrifice of Jesus | Luke 22:15-20 |after sunset |Christ, "our Passover," | John 13:1-5,John 13:14-15 | |which made possible the | 1 Corinthians 5:7 | |forgiveness of our sins. | ---------- Feast of |15th-21st of |Pictures God’s people--the| Leviticus 23:6-8 Unleavened |first month. |Church--putting away sin | Exodus 12:15-20,Exodus 12:42 Bread | |and striving to obey God’s| 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 | |commandments. | ---------- Pentecost |"Fiftieth" |Depicts the Church as the | Leviticus 23:15-21 |day, in the |firstfruits of salvation, | Acts 2:1-4 |third month. |the first to be | Romans 8:23 | |spiritually begotten and | | |born into God’s Family. | ---------- Feast of |First day of |Celebrates the Second | Leviticus 23:23-25 Trumpets |seventh month|Coming of Jesus Christ to | Matthew 24:30-31 | |intervene in world | 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 | |affairs, resurrect the | Revelation 11:15 | |firstfruits and establish | | |the Kingdom of God on | | |earth. | ---------- Day of |10th Day of |Portrays the binding and | Leviticus 23:26-32 Atonement |seventh month|removal of Satan for 1,000| Leviticus 16:7-31 | |years so that mankind at | Revelation 20:1-3 | |last may be made at one | | |with God. | ---------- Feast of |15th-21st of |Represents the 1,000 year | Leviticus 23:34-35,Leviticus 23:39-42 Tabernacles |seventh month|rule of Christ and the | Zechariah 14:16-19 | |Spirit-born children of | Isaiah 2:1-4 | |God on earth, when | Revelation 20:4 | |salvation will be offered | | |to all. | ---------- Last Great |22nd day of |Pictures the judgment when| Leviticus 23:36 Day |seventh month|the vast majority of | Ezekiel 37:1-14 | |humanity will be | Matthew 12:41-42 | |resurrected to mortal life| Revelation 20:5; Revelation 20:11-12 | |and given their | | |opportunity for salvation.| ----------

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct

answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. Most people who have heard the true Gospel have A. had their opportunity for salvation.

B. known it was the truth but rejected it.

C. not understood that message.

D. become true Christians.

2. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Humans cannot come to Christ unless God the Father calls them.

B. God does not intend for everyone to understand His truth at this time.

C. God allows spiritual blindness to affect the vast majority.

D. God is trying as hard as He can to save the world now.

3. If God had sent Jesus to perform miracles in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, A. He would have destroyed the cities.

B. the people would have repented.

C. He would have been unable to do very many works because of their unbelief.

D. the people would have accused Him of blasphemy and crucified Him.

4. When will the people of Tyre, Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah--and everyone who has not had an opportunity for salvation--be given their opportunity to be saved?

A. Never.

B. After the third resurrection.

C. After the Millennium.

D. During the Millennium.

5. Of God’s seven annual Sabbaths, the last one is A. the closing or seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. a distinct festival, the day immediatelv after the close of the Feast of Tabernacles.

C. no longer observed.

D. the only one Jesus did not observe.

6. Which one of the statements below is TRUE?

A. Christ will judge non-Christian peoples by the morals of the societies they lived in.

B. Jesus lived a good life so that those who don’t know any better don’t have to.

C. It is not possible to be saved in any way except through belief in Christ and His shed blood, followed by spiritual conversion and growth.

D. The vast majority are eternally "lost."

7. In Paul’s day, the majority of Israelites were A. blinded to the truth.

B. converted to Christianity.

C. living in Judea.

D. saved through their belief in Judaism.

8. Those who are spiritually blinded now A. will probably be converted before Christ’s return.

B. must all be taught the truth before Christ returns.

C. will have a future opportunity for salvation.

D. have committed sins that cannot be forgiven.

9. In Revelation 20:5,the phrase "the rest of the dead"

A. refers to those who have not yet heard or understood the true Gospel.

B. is better translated "the sleep of the dead."

C. is a mistranslation; most Greek texts say that the unsaved will be eternally tormented in hell.

D. refers to those who will be in the first resurrection.

10. Jesus spoke of a time of judgment in which peoples who lived in ancient times would A. rise to be condemned by the Jews of Jesus’ time.

B. be tormented for 100 years and finally repent.

C. go to heaven.

D. be resurrected at the same time as the first century Jews.

11. Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones A. pictures the time when unsaved dead will be resurrected to mortal life and offered God’s Spirit.

B. is not explained in the Bible.

C. shows that most Israelites are either in heaven or in hell.

D. pictures a resurrection to eternal life.

12. In Revelation 20:12,the "books" that are opened are A. used to eternally condemn the unrighteous.

B. the books of the Bible, opened to the understanding of the people.

C. found to be empty, corresponding to the people’s empty lives.

D. filled with a listing of the people’s sins.

13. In addition to the "books," what else will be opened during the Great White Throne Judgment period?

A. The gates of Dante’s inferno.

B. The gates of heaven.

C. The Book of Life.

D. All of the above.

14. Which one of the statements below is FALSE?

A. By the end of the Millennium, all who can be saved will have been saved.

B. God judges His people by evaluating how well they live by His written Word.

C. During the coming judgment period, people will be required to act on the knowledge God will give them.

D. During the coming judgment period, people will be given time to learn to choose righteousness.

15. The people who will rise in the second resurrection will learn that A. they are guilty of sin.

B. they deserve the death penalty.

C. Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin for them, if they accept Him as Savior.

D. All of the above.

16. When people in the second resurrection are taught the truth, they will A. generally reject it and stubbornly insist on living Satan’s way.

B. never think to compare the truth with what society had been taught during the first 6,000 years of human experience.

C. be offered the spirit of repentance.

D. be thrown into the lake of fire.

17. Why will the people in the second resurrection be allowed a lifetime of experience?

A. To demonstrate their evil natures.

B. Learning and building character takes time.

C. To suffer the results of their sins.

D. Punishment isn’t effective unless it lasts for a long time.

18. Christ instructed His apostles to observe a memorial of His death A. but He said nothing about His birthday.

B. and His birth and resurrection.

C. in a communion every Sunday morning.

D. but those instructions don’t apply to Christians today.

19. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

A. Christ was not born in December.

B. Many Christmas customs originated long before Christ.

C. Christmas and its customs have almost nothing to do with Christ’s birth.

D. Christ is pleased with those who celebrate His birthday by giving gifts to others.

20. Christ rose from the grave A. on Sunday morning, just as He said He would.

B. and Easter celebrates this every year.

C. on a Sa y, three days and three nights after His burial on a Wednesday.

D. not at the moment He said He would, but He is the Messiah nevertheless.

21. What does God say about adopting ancient customs to worship Him?

A. It was forbidden in the Old Testament, but it doesn’t matter today.

B. We should be careful to give Christian meanings to the old customs.

C. It’s probably all right because most everyone does it.

D. He says: "Learn not the way of the heathen" and "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God."

22. Which one of the statements below is FALSE?

A. An unforgiveable sin involves the attitude in which a person refuses to repent, even though he knows God’s way.

B. Those brought back to life in the third resurrection will repent of their sins.

C. In the second resurrection, people will be given an opportunity to repent.

D. God will forgive any sin that is repented of.

23. What will happen to those who will appear in the third resurrection?

A. Actually, there will not be a third resurrection.

B. Sinners will be eternally tormented in hell.

C. Unrepentant sinners will be thrown into the lake of fire to be consumed, their lives terminated forever.

D. They will be given eternal life in the new Jerusalem.

24. After the surface of the earth is baptized with fire, A. the new Jerusalem will come to earth and become the headquarters of the universe- ruling Family of God.

B. God’s people will all go to heaven to live at ease for eternity.

C. everyone will weep, lamenting the destruction.

D. the planet will remain a charred relic--a monument to the results of sin.

25. True Christians observe God’s Holy Days each year A. to be reminded annually of their part in God’s Master Plan.

B. in obedience to God’s commands.

C. to learn more about God’s plan of salvation.

D. All of the above.

Lesson 32

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 32

1987

_____ A NEW BEGINNING!

_____

Marvelous truths have been revealed to you through the study of your Bible with this course. Yet knowledge, unless it is applied, is of no value. So what will you do now?

You were born for an awesome and wonderful purpose! Yet, the wisest and most learned men do not know what it is. From time immemorial, men have wondered about the purpose of life. Philosophers have pondered it, only to confess total ignorance.

Yet, the priceless knowledge of God’s purpose for mankind has been made plain through your study of the Bible with The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course! The most astounding truth your studies have revealed is the fact that God is a Family, and that God is reproducing Himself!

Yes, God’s stupendous purpose for your life is that you be "born again" as an immortal, spirit member in the universe-ruling Family of God!

Through this course, now drawing to a close, you have also come to understand the meaning of world events. You have learned the solutions to the seemingly unsolvable problems facing the world today! You have learned the way to world peace--the way to freedom from fear and worry, poverty, sickness and unhappiness.

You have also learned the truth about such traditional doctrinal questions as heaven, hell, salvation, law and grace, the Great Tribulation, the rapture, the resurrection, Christ’s Second Coming and the Millennium!

Priceless Knowledge Yet, what are you doing with this priceless knowledge?

Finding the place where one can learn God’s truth is like finding a gold mine. These lessons of The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course have revealed "riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33). The world has been blinded to this priceless spiritual knowledge (Revelation 12:9). This simply is not the time for most people to be called by God (John 6:44). God has not yet opened their minds to understand the marvelous truth about His purpose for mankind.

God allows the world to be spiritually blinded (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Spiritual blindness covers all nations (Isaiah 25:7). But God has begun to remove the blindness from some, including you,

through His Church that is preaching Christ’s Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world! To those of you who have taken this course and whom God is calling, Christ says, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matthew 13:16). A New Way of Life

If you are like thousands of other students, you have been amazed and thrilled by the new truths you’ve discovered in your Bible. A new "way of life" has been opened up to you as a result of your studies. You have come to understand what it means to be a real Christian. As the Apostle Paul clearly stated in Romans 12:2,spiritual conversion is a renewing of one’s mind. This changing of the mind, with the power of God’s Holy Spirit, is the key to a new and successful way of thinking and living.

Most Christians, believe it or not, are not even ready to start on the road to living God’s way of life! Are you possibly among them?

One becomes a Christian upon sincere repentance, belief in Jesus Christ and in the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, baptism by immersion, and the receipt of the Holy Spirit after the laying on of hands. At that time God’s Spirit enters one’s mind and joins with the spirit in man. That is when the person begins to be "converted." The spiritually begotten mind then begins the process of being changed or renewed spiritually, and godly character begins to be created. A newly begotten Christian has made a commitment to serve God. He has embarked on a new life of spiritual growth and fulfillment. But this takes time. Time to apply the spiritual knowledge one is learning. Time to practice God’s way of life. But time does not stand still or wait for anyone!

Now Is the Time to Act What will you do with the precious knowledge you are learning? Are you really doing something about this knowledge God is giving you? Or do you think you are too "weak" to change? Do you resist having to change? Does it seem too difficult?

We humans don’t like to change. Humans don’t like to have to admit that one’s religion or one’s ways may have been wrong.

Notice this striking description of the human mind in Professor James Harvey Robinson’s book The Mind in the Making: "We are incredibly heedless in the formation of our beliefs, but find ourselves with an illicit passion for them when anyone proposes to rob us of their companionship. It is obviously not the ideas...but our self-esteem which is threatened....

"The little word my is the most important one in human affairs, and properly to reckon with it is the beginning of wisdom. It has the same force whether it is my dinner, my dog, my house or my faith, my country and my God....

"We like to continue to believe what we have been accustomed to accept as true, and the resentment aroused when doubt is cast upon any of our assumptions leads us to seek every manner of excuse for clinging to it. The result is that most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do."

What a true description of the human mind!

Yet, the very key to our future survival is our willingness to repent of our own ways and change our own ideas, customs and beliefs so that they correspond with God’s ways and teachings as revealed in the Bible.

Count the Cost

We need seriously to count the cost before committing ourselves to living God’s way of life (Luke 14:28-30). We must put God first in our lives, everywhere and always (Luke 14:26-27). We must strive to live God’s way of outgoing love and concern for others, based on God’s commandments. This is the cost in answering God’s calling--in becoming a true Christian. Not one in a thousand people today understands what this means!

It requires a sense of urgency. It requires putting all other pursuits second. It requires forsaking all the false ways of the world and being willing to take whatever consequences come.

Christ will never leave us while we serve Him in fulfilling this special calling (Hebrews 13:5-6). Satan will try to discourage us from finishing the job, sometimes through the influence of our loved ones. But Christ will finish the work He has begun in and through us (Php 1:6). He is not a quitter. He risked His own eternal life and position in God’s Family for all of us personally, and won!

Therefore, you can win! But first, you must start!

If God is calling you, you will face perhaps the most difficult thing for any human--admitting you have been wrong. This is the beginning of real repentance. You will want to change your life--stop following Satan’s way and do what God tells you to do. You will begin to have the power to say no to wrong urges, habits, desires and attitudes. The spiritually mature Christian must have the ability to discern truth from error. But it is not enough to just hear the truth. One must respond (Romans 2:13).

Many today are hearing God’s truth proclaimed on the World Tomorrow program, in the pages of The Plain Truth, The Good News and The Bible Correspondence Course. But only those who respond, who take action, will be saved!

You have been warned. You have seen the plain truth of God’s Word revealed. You have seen for yourself out of your own Bible that the teachings of modern Christianity are false! And you have discovered that God means business!

What are you going to do with this precious, priceless knowledge that God has revealed to you through your diligent study of His revealed Word? The choice is up to you. You are accountable!

LESSON 32 Repentance Is a New Beginning Have you come to the place where you see yourself as you really are--as God sees you? Have you "sized yourself up" by means of the Ten Commandments, as magnified by the entirety of God’s Word, and seen where you fall short? Have you come to the point in your life where you want to give up walking contrary to God and surrender yourself completely to Him? Are you willing to keep all of God’s commandments?

Unless you have come to see yourself as Job saw himself (Job 42:1-6); unless you have cried out to God for forgiveness as David did (Psalms 51:1-10); unless you have begun to change your attitudes, your thoughts, your actions; unless you have been really broken up about your past life; unless you have repented from the heart; unless you have made a complete about-face; unless you have done these things, you simply have not yet begun to start the Christian way of life!

Notice what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13:5:"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." The prophet John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to "bring forth therefore fruits meet for [befitting] repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

How can you examine--prove--your own self? By comparing your life, thoughts, words and actions with the Word of God.

God’s eyes are upon those who are of a meek and contrite spirit--those who tremble before the two-edged sword of His Word. God recognizes a repentant attitude--a broken spirit, a humble seeking for forgiveness and mercy. He wants us all to have the humble, teachable attitude of little children (1 Peter 2:1-2;Matthew 18:2-4).

True repentance requires a permanent change of direction. It is a total commitment. There is no turning back. It is not a temporary, spontaneous emotional response so prevalent today in religious "revival" meetings. It is something deeper and vastly more profound!

Unconditional Surrender to God

Once we repent--completely surrender to God--and are baptized, God puts His Spirit in us, in our minds. It then begins to influence our ways of thinking and living. But the Holy Spirit does not take away our free moral agency. It won’t force us to do anything. It only leads us in the direction of God’s truth and gives us the spiritual strength to do His will.

Repentance is giving up your way and turning to God’s way. It means unconditional surrender to live by every word of God. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it means to live by the Bible. It means complete and voluntary submission to the authority of God, as expressed in His revealed Word!

1. Does surrendering to God mean that we are to put Him ahead of and above all else? Matthew 10:37.Does this include our own lives? Luke 14:26.

COMMENT: "Hate" in Luke 14:26 means to love less by comparison, as the parallel account in Matthew 10:37 shows.

2. Though it sounds paradoxical, did Jesus say that whoever would quit being his old sinful selfish self, and give up or "lose" his life for Christ’s sake, would live? Matthew 10:39;Matthew 16:24-25.

COMMENT: Jesus is talking about giving one’s life in total obedience and service to God.

Repentance emphatically does not mean we must give up the use of or appreciation of the worth of material things. What God is interested in is the attitude we have toward material things--whether we seek first, as our highest priority, His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

God wants us to prosper and be in good health (3 John 1:2). He wants us to give up those things that are bad for us--that hurt us spiritually and physically. Repentance and conversion make possible our intelligent use of God’s material creation through the guidance of His law and His Spirit.

3. Is surrendering to God something requiring serious thought? Must we first "count the cost"--realizing what surrendering to God really requires? Luke 14:27-30.

Beware of False Repentance

Repentance is a required step toward salvation--entering the Kingdom of God. Real repentance is a matter of mind as well as emotion. It is heartfelt realization that we have thought, spoken, and lived contrary to God's law and that we should quit doing so!

1. Can people worship Christ, acknowledging that He is "Lord," and yet not enter His Kingdom? Matthew 7:21.How else can one worship Him, and yet not be born of God at Christ's coming? Matthew 15:7-9.Then who will enter God's Kingdom? Matthew 7:21,last part.

COMMENT: Notice what else Jesus said about people who worship Him without keeping God's commandments: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men....Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

Carnal man would rather do almost anything else than surrender to God. His natural mind (Jeremiah 17:9;Romans 8:7-8)rebels at the thought of submitting to God's law. Some substitute their own laws and traditions in place of God's law. Others claim that God's law is null and void, deceiving themselves by thinking they can receive salvation by merely believing in Christ as their Savior.

Human nature wants to be right, but it doesn't necessarily want to do right! So people often say, "Well, here's the way I look at it"--thus putting their concept of righteousness above the Bible. If it "looks right" to them, it becomes their law. This is self-righteousness.

Another way Satan has deceived millions about repentance and salvation is through penance. Your Bible clearly shows that no amount of human works can bring about the forgiveness of sin. Even the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament could not bring about full spiritual forgiveness and a clear conscience. They were only symbolic types picturing the supreme sacrifice for sin--Jesus Christ--who was to come much later to die for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 9:9-14;Hebrews 10:4-10). And the only way Christ's sacrifice can be applied to blot out one's sins is by accepting it, forsaking one's past life of disobedience, and by beginning to obey God. That is true repentance!

2. What does Isaiah 64:6 say about self-righteousness? And what did Jesus say about those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous"? Luke 18:9-14.

3. How did the Apostle Paul describe the society we live in today? 2 Timothy 3:1-5,especially 2 Timothy 3:5.

COMMENT: Many people profess to be religious--they attend churches-- they have a "form of godliness." But they have the attitudes and practices that have made this world what it is today--"this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4).

God requires a complete reversal in the direction we have been going. In other words, God wants us to quit following the ways that seem right according to human reasoning--to completely turn around and begin following the way of God as revealed in the Bible!

4. What else does God say concerning this present evil world in which we have all had a part? 1 John 2:15-17.What should we do? Revelation 18:4;Romans 12:2.

COMMENT: Here is the starting point on the way to salvation. God commands us to come out of this world and forsake its wrong ways. No longer conforming to its ways that are contrary to God's way, we are to become more and more like Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to renew our minds.

5. What is the result of this world's kind of sorrow, or "repentance"? 2 Corinthians 7:10,last part. But what kind of sorrow for sin does God accept, and where does it lead? 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.

COMMENT: It is commonly believed that repentance is simply a temporary remorseful feeling over past mistakes without a real change in one's way of living. Such "repentance" is not repentance at all. It is totally unacceptable to God and leads only to death!

Real repentance is something far more than a temporary, emotional "experience." True repentance--"godly sorrow"--involves a complete and permanent about-face in our thoughts and deeds!

Win the Christian Fight!

All who have been called to the Christian way of life have three deadly enemies to face, each of which tends to discourage us from overcoming sin and developing the character of God.

These deadly foes can come between us and God--separating us from Him. They tend to put wedges into our minds that can grow, gradually separating us from the guidance and power of God's Holy Spirit and the faith of Jesus Christ--if we allow them to.

These deadly enemies must be defeated and God tells us how to do it!

1. Does Paul show that effort is involved in living the Christian life--that eternal life is worth fighting for so it does not slip from one's grasp? 1 Timothy 6:12;1 Timothy 1:18-19;2 Timothy 2:3-4.

2. Did Paul steadfastly follow God's way of life--did he know, shortly before his death, that he had won the Christian fight? 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

3. Is our warfare against physical armies? Or is it a spiritual warfare? 2 Corinthians 10:3-4.Just what are we to fight against? 2 Corinthians 10:5.

COMMENT: The first enemy in our daily warfare is our human nature with its ungodly characteristics (Galatians 5:19-21). This nature causes us to rationalize deceitfully (Jeremiah 17:9). It encourages us to sin--to break God's spiritual law--thus cutting us off from Him. Wrong habits and impulses can destroy us spiritually, unless we resist them.

4. What is the second deadly enemy of true Christians? Galatians 1:4.What should our attitude be toward the world's social order with its glitter, glamor, status-seeking and appeal? 1 John 2:15-17.

COMMENT: The Apostle John was referring to the society of this world, so much of which is built on and motivated by vanity, self-centeredness, lust and greed. Because most people are spiritually deceived (Revelation 12:9), they don't understand how so many of the world's ways could be wrong in God's sight. Nevertheless, this world's ways do bombard us continually with temptations that can lead us away from following Christ!

5. Should we strive to avoid the evil that is in the world? 2 Corinthians 6:14-18;Revelation 18:4.Does this mean that we should move away from populated areas? John 17:15-18.Notice especially the first part of John 17:15.

COMMENT: Christ's prayer in John 17:1-26 shows that God does not expect us to move to the mountains or deserts to escape the world's distractions! Rather, we should strive to be separate spiritually and refuse to participate in the sins of the world. From earliest childhood we began conforming to the customs and practices that we learned from the teachings and examples of others. We merely accepted, without question, most of the practices and life-styles of the society around us. But as we learn about God's way, we are to conscientiously apply ourselves to our new life in Christ. "Be not conformed to this world," said Paul, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Unless we cease conforming to this world, we will not grow in the character of Christ or overcome spiritually. The many snares in the world can be compared to an obstacle course that challenges and strengthens a good soldier in training. We must learn to hurdle those obstacles.

6. Do people always appreciate the person who tries to live according to God's law? 1 Peter 4:3-4;John 15:18-20. How should we respond to those who might be antagonistic toward our desire to follow Christ? Matthew 5:43-47;Romans 12:20-21.

COMMENT: God has not chosen to call everyone at this time. Some may persecute and ridicule those who follow God's way. Yet they are potential Sons of God, and we are to love them! God will eventually open their minds and show them His truth so they, too, can become converted, as depicted by the last step in God's Master Plan.

7. What, or who, is the third great enemy of every Christian? 1 Peter 5:8-9.Is Satan ultimately responsible for inspiring all the evil in this world? 2 Corinthians 4:4;Ephesians 2:1-3.As the invisible ruler, has he deceived the whole world? Revelation 12:9.

COMMENT: Satan the devil became perverted in his thinking and thus developed his evil nature, which he has "broadcast" to humanity ever since Adam and Eve.

Humans have unsuspectingly acquired Satan's nature, which we call "human nature." This natural state of mind, the carnal mind, "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). But once the Holy Spirit of God is added to our minds, we then have access to the spiritual power to resist the attitudes of self-centeredness, lust, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, resentment, competition, strife, bitterness and hate that are spiritually broadcast to the mind by Satan. No one is forced to obey these daily impulses from Satan. But the unsuspecting do so without realizing what is taking place in their minds. Most people just drift along, responding to emotions and impulses that often find expression in "works of the flesh" and vain pursuits (Galatians 5:19-21).

Thus Satan, the "god of this world," the "prince of the power of the air," is actually working "in" (Ephesians 2:2)the minds of unsuspecting people all over the world. That is why this world is so thoroughly deceived today!

8. After your begettal by God’s Holy Spirit, the devil will continue to try to deceive you, to lead you away from Christ and His way. What did Paul warn the Corinthian Christians? 2 Corinthians 11:2-4,2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Did some Christians in Paul’s day begin to fall victim to the deceptions of the devil’s false ministers once again? Galatians 1:6-8;Galatians 3:1.

COMMENT: Conversion does not shield us from Satan’s "wavelength." He continues to broadcast his attitudes to our minds in an attempt to spiritually overthrow us. When Jesus spoke of overcoming, He referred to overcoming Satan’s way.

Those who have turned from Satan’s way are fighting to overcome his subtle urgings, and are striving to remain true to God’s way--the way of God’s government. They are the ones Satan hates. He is especially interested in destroying them! But with God’s protection and restraining power over Satan, which He promises to give us if we remain close to Him, we can overcome!

Before Jesus Christ could qualify to restore the government of God and rule all nations, He, too, had to withstand Satan’s most severe temptations. Notice how the devil attempted to deceive and influence Jesus Christ to sin.

9. When Jesus had fasted and was extremely hungry, how did the devil appeal both to human vanity and hunger? Matthew 4:1-3.And to the human desire for prestige, glory and power? Matthew 4:5-9. What were Jesus’ immediate responses? Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7, Matthew 4:10. What was the outcome of this spiritual battle? Matthew 4:11.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ overcame the devil. He resisted Satan, conquered him and showed His mastery over him! When He gave the devil an order, Satan had to obey. He slunk away, defeated in this supreme spiritual encounter.

Christ overcame the devil’s wiles by the Word of God. He responded to the devil’s temptations by citing the scripture that applied in each situation. He knew the Word of God thoroughly. He knew God’s will. And He obeyed it. Therefore, the devil could not deceive Him!

10. Are we today also to resist the devil with the truth God has revealed to us? 1 Peter 5:9.What must the devil do if resisted steadfastly? James 4:7.

11. What instructions on fighting against the impulses and attitudes of the devil does God give us through Paul? Ephesians 6:10-12.What are we to put on to be able to fight this spiritual battle? Ephesians 6:11-13. Of what does God’s spiritual armor consist? Ephesians 6:14-17.

COMMENT: We are to be clothed with the revealed "truth" of God (John 17:17)so we can’t be deceived, and wear the "breastplate of righteousness," which is the keeping of God’s law (Psalms 119:172). Our feet are to be shod "with the preparation of the gospel of peace"-- we are to be actively doing our part in getting out the message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God that will rule this earth and bring it peace. The "shield of faith" protects us from the attacks and enticements of Satan. This is not our own human faith, but the faith of Jesus Christ, which can be within us (Galatians 2:20;Revelation 14:12). Christ’s faith is imparted to us by God’s Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The "helmet of salvation" (Ephesians 6:17)keeps us properly oriented toward our spiritual goal. It is the knowledge of God’s awesome purpose for mankind--of becoming Spirit-born members of the Family of God! The "sword of the Spirit" refers to the written Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). It is the only offensive weapon in fighting the devil’s influence. To rightly use this

weapon we must study the Bible and learn God’s will and His promises.

12. What else did Paul say is necessary to win the Christian fight? Ephesians 6:18-20.

COMMENT: We are to draw close to God in persevering prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), praying for all of God’s people, for the work of God’s Church and for our own needs. This is the formula for successfully overcoming Satan and forcing him to flee. This is the perfect strategy for defeating human nature and the sinful attractions of the world, which are both motivated by the archenemy of God.

We have a continuing spiritual fight on our hands. But with the Word of God as our sword and His armor as our protection, if we persevere to the end, we will succeed in overcoming all three deadly foes!

You Can Overcome

Once baptized--and that is by immersion--you have embarked on a new and exciting way of life. But God knows that we still can and sometimes do sin (1 John 1:8-9). But our merciful God promises to forgive us if we repent, and will en us so we can continue to overcome and be granted eternal life in His glorious Kingdom. But exactly how is it possible to continue to overcome, to press on toward the eternal goal, to strive toward developing the perfect, holy and righteous character of Jesus Christ and be born into God’s Family? It is through the faith of Christ--"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Paul said: "I can do all things [overcome any trial, test, trouble or sin] through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Php 4:13). And so can we!

Yes, through Christ we can please God, fulfill His law and overcome! Let’s review how.

1. Did the Apostle Paul, inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, say that we must "work out" our own salvation? Php 2:12.Also notice 2 Peter 1:10.

COMMENT: Upon our spiritual begettal, we have something we must begin to do and continue doing for the rest of our natural lives. The Christian life involves "works"--doing something! Christians must put forth effort to overcome. Christ said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God’s way of life is one of productivity, growth and exciting challenge.

2. Can we earn our salvation by our works? Romans 6:23;Php 2:13;Ephesians 2:8-9.

COMMENT: Eternal life is a gift of God. You cannot earn salvation by your works. However, the Christian still has his or her part to do.

We must put away the habits and sins that enslave us. We must overcome ungodly habits and thoughts that would ultimately lead to eternal death (Romans 6:23). But how? It is impossible to conquer the influences of the world, the flesh and the devil through human strength alone.

3. Did Paul experience numerous frustrations in striving to overcome his nature? Read Romans 7:7-25,especially noting Romans 7:15, Romans 7:19 and Romans 7:23.

COMMENT: Paul found that when he tried to resist his human nature, bad habits and sins would not easily be dismissed. In fact, when his attention was drawn to eradicating personal sins, they seemed to become more pronounced. Paul cried out: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall

deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Of course, Paul did overcome. Shortly before his death, he wrote to Timothy: "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day [the time of the resurrection at Christ's Second Coming], and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8,Revised Standard Version).

Notice how Paul succeeded in overcoming.

4. What is the key to Christian overcoming? Php 4:13;John 15:5;1 John 4:4;Romans 8:37.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, who has already defeated Satan and qualified to become "King of kings and Lord of lords," will help Christians defeat Satan and this world's influences through the Holy Spirit! He told His disciples to be of good cheer because He had overcome the world (John 16:33). John further testified that the One who dwells in every true Christian through the Spirit of God is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4).

5. But didn't Jesus say He could, of Himself, do nothing? John 5:30.

COMMENT: Even the very Son of God said He could do nothing (no spiritual works) by His own human power. If Christ, when in the flesh, had no faith in Himself, how much less, then, can we accomplish by trusting in ourselves?

Few realize that Christ's obedience and even the miracles He performed were not done by any supernatural power of His own. All His spiritual works were done through faith in God's power.

6. What was the source of Christ's dynamic faith? John 14:10-11.

COMMENT: The Father who lived in Jesus through the Holy Spirit made His obedience to God's law possible! Christ had the faith of God.

7. Are Christians to live by faith? Hebrews 10:38;Romans 1:17.But is having faith in God all that is required? Romans 3:31.Is faith without obedience to God a dead faith? James 2:20-22.

COMMENT: The Bible shows that we have a part in the salvation process. Nevertheless, many professing Christians believe that Jesus obeyed God's law in our stead. But a Christian is not excused from overcoming, growing in spiritual character, and enduring in spite of opposition or temptation to quit. The Bible makes it clear that having faith does not excuse us from having spiritual works. This is a great mystery to those who don't understand God's purpose and plan of salvation. Since we must do these things to be saved, yet are unable to do them of ourselves, many have concluded that God sent Jesus to do it all for us. Nothing could be further from the truth! The answer is the key to salvation. It is faith. Faith in God's power-- the same kind of living faith Jesus had!

8. By whose faith is a Christian's "righteousness"--his obedience to God's spiritual law--made possible? Revelation 14:12.

COMMENT: Spirit-begotten Christians have the very "faith of Jesus." It's not just our faith in Him, but His faith--the very faith through which He kept God's law--placed in us and acting in us!

9. Does the Bible call Jesus the author and finisher of our faith? Hebrews 12:2-4.

COMMENT: A more accurate translation of the phrase "author and finisher'' is "pioneer, perfecter." Jesus led the way, as our pioneer, setting US the supreme example of living faith. But Jesus also perfects His faith in us! Here's how.

10. Did the Apostle Paul state that Christ lived in him? Galatians 2:20.How did Christ live in him? Php 2:5;Romans 8:9-10.Did Paul live his life by Christ's faith dwelling in him? Galatians 2:20 again.

COMMENT: Paul didn't live by his own faith. The mind of Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God implanted in Paul's mind the same faith that can be in your mind! This faith--the faith of Christ--will enable you to live a life of overcoming as did Paul.

11. Is the faith of Jesus Christ, by which we receive eternal salvation, a gift of God? Ephesians 2:8-9.Is this faith one of the results of having the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22.

COMMENT: The faith that saves is the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith--not our faith. And Christ, who can live in us by God's Spirit, will impart His strong faith to us and thus make our spiritual obedience and overcoming possible!

12. What must you do to receive the Holy Spirit and the faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 2:38.Must you be willing to obey God? Acts 5:32.And must you first show faith toward Christ before He will give you His faith? Acts 20:21;Romans 1:17.

COMMENT: God will give His Holy Spirit and the resulting faith of Christ only to those who meet these prior conditions. We must show our own faith, or belief, in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed to pay the death penalty our sins have incurred. Upon faith in, and our acceptance of Him as personal Savior, and after repentance and water baptism, God is bound by His Word to give us His Holy Spirit.

13. Once we receive God's Holy Spirit, must the faith that it imparts grow? 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

COMMENT: Faith is not implanted in our minds whole and complete at the moment we receive the Spirit of God. Faith must grow. It must be nourished; it needs exercise and practice. That faith must grow by testing and by works. It must be living faith.

We must press toward the goal of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ, to strive toward the perfection of the character of God through the faith of Christ--"Christ in us, the hope of glory." And it is all accomplished as a result of having the Holy Spirit in us, and as we exercise it.

We are to keep God's law and live the Christian life as if it depended altogether on our own effort, but because "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," God makes up the necessary difference. Like Paul, who was mindful of his own limitations, we look to God for the help to accomplish His purpose in us--"For my very weakness makes me strong in him" (2 Corinthians 12:10,Phillips).

Through Christ you, too, can conquer every sin, surmount every obstacle, defeat every foe, and overcome every hindrance that threatens to block your way into God's Family!

Remember the Apostle Paul exuded Christ's confidence. He was sure! He was certain! Paul walked, talked and lived with Christ and the Father through the Holy Spirit within him. He had the faith and assurance of Jesus Christ. So can you!

(If you have not already read our free booklet What Is Faith? and our reprint article "How to Be an Overcomer," be sure to request them. They provide additional important details about spiritual growth and overcoming.) Why Overcoming Is So Important

Those who have been called to the Christian way of life have been called to a life of growing and overcoming. Let's understand why it is so important, and what it has to do with the responsibilities Spirit-born Christians will have in the Kingdom of God.

1. Did Jesus Christ become perfect? Hebrews 5:9;Hebrews 2:9-10.Notice especially the last part of verse 10. What did Christ set as the goal for His true followers? Matthew 5:48.Who are they to become like? Ephesians 4:13.

2. Even though Christ was the Son of God and had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), did He still have to learn obedience? Hebrews 5:8-9.Did Christ overcome and did He resist temptation? John 16:33;Hebrews 4:15.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ became perfect through the trials and tests of human experience. He overcame the temptations of the devil, His flesh and the world around Him. In spite of opposition and temptation, He kept God's commandments perfectly. Thus He was able to become the Savior of mankind and the example of spiritual maturity.

3. How important is overcoming to your being in God's Kingdom and receiving a reward? Revelation 2:7,Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:26-27;Revelation 3:5,Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:21;Revelation 21:7.

COMMENT: Through overcoming the sinful pulls of the flesh, the world and the devil, our spiritual character is being perfected--we are building the character of God. And the more we overcome, the greater the responsibility we will be given in Christ's government on earth. Thus the greater will be our reward. But no one can overcome for us. It requires putting forth effort on our part, together with the power of God's Holy Spirit, to become the kind of spiritually minded and motivated person God can use in His Kingdom.

4. Is overcoming done all at once, or is it a lifelong process? Matthew 24:13,Matthew 24:45-47.

COMMENT: Striving to develop the spiritual character of Christ is a process of overcoming throughout the Christian life. It is those who overcome to the end--those who are still growing in character at Christ's return (or at their death, if that comes first)--who shall inherit God's Kingdom and receive a reward!

5. Does 2 Peter 1:5-9 show the need for continual growth in the virtues of Christian character as long as a person lives? Do 2 Peter 1:10-11 imply that those who don't continue to grow and overcome will not enter God's Kingdom?

Qualifying to Rule with Christ

1. By what principle can a person of ordinary ability qualify to take on far greater responsibility in the Kingdom of God? Luke 16:10.

COMMENT: We learn to rule by being faithful--conscientious--in whatever we do. We must put into practice in our daily lives the principles and laws we learn from God's Word. Even the person who considers himself to have only a little ability and natural talent can qualify to rule in God's Kingdom. We learn to rule in the world tomorrow by learning to manage our own affairs and responsibilities today, no matter how small they may be.

God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11;Galatians 3:28). Whether we were born male or female has no bearing on our reward in God's Kingdom. Our future reward will be determined by our works in this life. Recall that it is by God's grace that we will enter His Kingdom, for immortality is a gift from God. But it is our works that will qualify us for an office of responsibility--an opportunity for greater service, for doing more good-- once we are born into God's ruling Family. But to qualify--to be properly trained--to serve and teach in the world tomorrow, we must learn to serve and teach now. The only reason any person is called to salvation now is to qualify to help call and save the thousands of millions during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period. God hasn't selected certain ones today for special favors. The Christian life, therefore, is one of preparing for great service in tomorrow's world. Spirit-begotten Christians are now in training to help teach the world God's way and to administer the government of God for the good of humanity! Are You Qualifying for That Job?

You were born with the awesome potential of becoming a member of the universe-ruling Family of God--and, if God is calling you now, to have a part in governing, teaching and guiding the world in the Millennium and in the Great White Throne Judgment period. And after that, to help rule the entire universe throughout all eternity! This is the incredible human potential, the awesome destiny God has in store for those who become members of His Family! Have you begun the salvation process toward this marvelous goal? Analyze your own life and character. Have you begun obeying God? Are you growing spiritually? Are you growing in self-control? In the ability to restrain wrong desires, selfish motives or vanity? Are you replacing bad habits and attitudes with right thoughts and deeds?

If you have not yet begun to control and constructively guide even the little powers in your care--your temper, your voice, your passions and emotions, your income--then how could God entrust you with far greater responsibilities in the Kingdom of God? If you are not faithful in the use of your present income, who will entrust to your care the true riches and the great power of God?

Ask God for the understanding and wisdom to rightly use and direct the comparatively small powers, abilities and responsibilities that are now yours so you can be a faithful and productive servant of God.

Strive to be faithful over what God has already given you, so one day Christ can say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much" (Matthew 25:21,Revised Standard Version). This life is the training ground. We learn to rule by performing our responsibilities faithfully and by learning to rule over ourselves as we live the Christian way of life.

Preparing to rule in God’s Kingdom begins with submission to His rule now. God will not save any person He does not govern (Luke 19:27). So learn God’s laws. Study them. Think about them. Live by them. And with the power of God’s Holy Spirit, grow in the character of God by obeying Him and overcoming the temptations of the world and the influence of Satan.

Seek God by drawing closer to Him in prayer and Bible study. Grow spiritually. Change! Continually build the character of God until death, or until the moment Jesus Christ returns and instantly changes your weak, physical body into a powerful, sinless, glorified spirit body (Php 3:20-21).

Then you will be ready to rule with Christ--to fulfill your awesome destiny of helping to rule the earth and the universe beyond as a member of the Family of God!

It’s a breathtaking, exciting, incredible calling! A glorious, wonderful future! Have you begun this divine calling?

TEST This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It’s an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. The knowledge God has revealed to you through your studies is A. understood by most people today.

B. not relevant in our advanced technological society.

C. priceless knowledge for which vou will be held accountable.

D. not being proclaimed to the world by God’s Church.

2. The most astounding truth your studies have revealed is that A. God is a Family, and that God is reproducing Himself through mortal human beings.

B. Christ, working through His Church, is trying to save the whole world now.

C. all life will be destroyed in the coming nuclear World War III.

D. God’s plan was thwarted by Satan in the Garden of Eden.

3. As humans, we A. like to admit wrong belief’s and customs.

B. don’t like to change.

C. are very careful in the formation of our beliefs.

D. place little importance in the word my.

4. The key to our future survival is A. mastering the self-help techniques advocated by modern psychologists.

B. moving to the deserts or mountains.

C. our willingness to repent of our own ways and begin to obey God.

D. hoping that everything will be all right.

5. Before committing ourselves to living God’s way of life, we must A. seriously count the cost.

B. seek permission of family and friends.

C. overcome all wrong habits and sins.

D. forsake everything to do with this world and become hermits.

6. Answering God’s calling--becoming a true Christian--requires A. a genuine sense of urgency.

B. putting all other pursuits second.

C. forsaking all the false ways of the world and being willing to take whatever consequences come.

D. All of the above.

7. What is the beginning of real repentance?

A. Merely being sorry for one’s sins.

B. Doing perhaps the most difficult thing for any human-- admitting one has been wrong.

C. Fasting and afflicting one’s body.

D. Comparing one’s way of life with the standards of this world.

8. A newly begotten Christian has A. made a commitment to serve God for the remainder of his or her life.

B. repented, been baptized and received God’s Holy Spirit.

C. embarked on a new life of spiritual growth and overcoming.

D. All of the above.

9. Repentance is A. simply an emotional "feeling" we must somehow work up to become a Christian.

B. merely "accepting Christ."

C. a new beginning-- the first step toward becoming a true Christian.

D. not really necessary for salvation.

10. To repent A. has nothing to do with making a total commitment to following God’s way of life.

B. means to "change direction"--to go the opposite way; in this case, God’s way.

C. does not involve a change of direction in any facet of one’s way of living.

D. means to stop transgressing one’s conscience, without referring to the Bible for further instruction.

11. The natural mind, as influenced by Satan, A. does not want to submit to God.

B. seeks to minimize or explain away sins.

C. rejects God’s way of life in order to keep the traditions of men.

D. All of the above.

12. What are we to repent of or turn from?

A. Certainly not any enmity against God’s law.

B. Sin, as defined by God’s Word--the Holy Bible.

C. Only our breaking of man’s laws.

D. Only of our breaking the Ten Commandments in the letter.

13. Repentance A. means unconditional surrender to God--giving one’s life in total obedience and service to Him.

B. involves merely going to church once a week.

C. is not something God grants through His Spirit.

D. is a matter of giving up everything good--choosing a life of poverty and self-denial.

14. The three deadly enemies true Christians face A. tend to discourage us from overcoming sin and developing God’s holy, righteous character.

B. can separate us from God--if we allow them to.

C. must be defeated and God tells us how to do it.

D. All of the above.

15. The first enemy in our daily spiritual warfare A. does not cause us to rationalize deceitfully.

B. is our human nature with its ungodly characteristics (Galatians 5:19-21).

C. does not encourage wrong habits and impulses.

D. None or the above.

16. The society of this world A. is not a deadly enemy of true Christians.

B. has little influence on most people’s ideas and beliefs.

C. can distract a Christian from following Christ, if he is not careful.

D. is not motivated by vanity, self-centeredness, lust and greed.

17. The third great enemy of every Christian A. is Satan the devil, who is ultimately responsible for inspiring all the evil in this world.

B. cannot force people to obey the impulses he broadcasts to their minds.

C. flees if resisted steadfastly.

D. All of the above.

18. How can a Christian successfully wage spiritual warfare against Satan’s evil influence?

A. By just knowing the Word of God thoroughly.

B. Simply by fleeing from the devil.

C. By putting on the whole spiritual armor of God, as described in Ephesians 6:1-24.

D. By diligent, fervent prayer only.

19. Which one of the following statements about the armor of God is FALSE?

A. The "shield of faith" protects us from the attacks and enticements of Satan.

B. The "helmet of salvation" keeps us properly oriented toward our spiritual goal.

C. The "sword of the Spirit" is our only offensive weapon.

D. The "breastplate of righteousness" is the occasional keeping of God’s law.

20. Spiritual growth and overcoming A. requires putting forth diligent effort on our part.

B. is not a lifelong process.

C. does not involve "works"--it is simply a state of mind.

D. will earn us our salvation-- eternal life in God’s Kingdom.

21. The faith that enables one to overcome and live the Christian way of life A. is supplied by each Christian.

B. does not need to grow--it is whole and complete at the moment one receives God’s Spirit.

C. can be "worked up" if one is a true believer.

D. is the very faith of Jesus Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit.

22. Why is it important for Spirit-begotten Christians to grow spiritually and overcome sin in this life?

A. So they can be perfect now.

B. They won’t enter God’s Kingdom if they don’t grow and overcome.

C. Whatever the reason, it has nothing to do with developing God’s character.

D. So they can qualify for salvation.

23. God expects all Christians to grow and overcome spiritually A. in equal amounts regardless of their natural ability.

B. only after they are resurrected and/or changed to immortal life.

C. in whatever circumstances they may find themselves.

D. only if they are naturally very talented.

24. How can we qualify to rule with Christ in the world tomorrow?

A. By neglecting our physical possessions.

B. By failing to develop our talents and abilities.

C. By not learning to control our emotions.

D. By learning to properly manage our own affairs and responsibilities today, no matter how small they may be.

25. The more we overcome the sinful pulls of the flesh, the world and the devil, the A. greater the responsibility we will be given in the Kingdom of God.

B. less we will build God’s holy, righteous and perfect character.

C. smaller our reward will be in God’s Kingdom.

D. None of the above.

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