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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

The SECOND HORSEMEN The RED HORSE of WAR

**Why Does God
Allow Suffering?**

Is there a purpose?

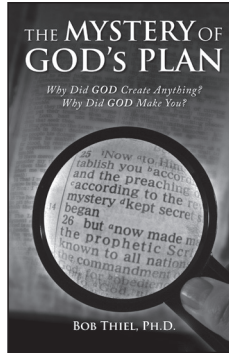
**Why Did God
Make You?**

Yes, GOD has a plan
for YOU personally.

BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



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About the Front Cover: Artwork developed for the Continuing Church of God related to the rider of the red horse of Revelation 6.

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The Second Horsemen: The Red Horse of War

Jesus warned about wars and rumors of wars as part of the beginning of sorrows:

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Matthew 24:6-8)

Similarly, notice what the sixth chapter of the Book of Revelation says about the ride of the second horseman:

3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. (Revelation 6:3-4)

Possibly somewhat paralleling the ride of the second horseman of Revelation 6:3-4, Jesus warned about wars:

Notice some of what in 1973, the old Worldwide Church of God (WCG), taught will happen after the first horseman:

As the first horsemen rides forth "conquering and to conquer" in the name of his false religion, the second horseman — war — is quick on his heels as that instrument of conquest. (Alexander G, pp. 23-24)

It should be pointed out that although the old WCG tended to see all the horsemen coming rapidly after each other, the following statements by Jesus suggest a time gap:

8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be

deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. 9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but **the end will not come immediately.**" (Luke 21:8-9)

How long the time gap between the horsemen is not specified, but the above suggests a significant gap. A gap that we now seem to be in.

Consider that the opening of the second seal (Revelation 6:3-4) is to result in less peace on the Earth.

While this is commonly called the red horse (or red horseman) of war, that is not quite what is stated. Notice that he "takes peace from the earth AND that people should kill one another." Could it be that events in 2020, such as COVID-19 are consistent with taking "peace from the earth"?

Around the world people are AFRAID. The feeling of normalcy is gone for many around the globe. Consider that the travel restrictions are because of fear. The media and government officials are saying everything will not go back to how it was and that we need to accept what they have called "the new normal." Speculatively, could this be related to the opening of the second seal?

Not since World War II have we seen any event affect the entire planet so much. I have had a kind of gnawing feeling that perhaps the second seal was opened the late Spring or the early Summer of 2020 or even the Fall of 2019. Hence maybe we should consider the opening of the second seal as possible.

The literal Greek here for "peace" (εἰρήνην transliterated as eirēnēn) in Revelation 6 can be interpreted to mean taking away prosperity as well (see BibleHub.com). COVID-19 has, to a degree, done

that. People are afraid or at least uneasy to a degree we have not seen around the world anytime in the 21st century.

Barnes Notes on the Bible states:

The power given to him that sat on the horse: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. This would seem to indicate that the condition immediately preceding this was a condition of tranquility, and that this was now disturbed by some cause producing discord and bloodshed. This idea is confirmed by the original words - τὴν εἰρήνην *tēn eirēnēn* - "the peace"; that is, the previously existing peace. When peace in general is referred to, the word is used without the article: Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace - βαλεῖν εἰρήνην *balein eirēnēn* - upon the earth."

So, this rider is not just a rider of war, but one involved in taking away THE peace.

Consider, scripturally, that this taking peace or prosperity by the rider of the red horse does NOT preclude the peace deal Daniel 9:27.

Nor does it prevent Mystery Babylon the Great from having a time of prosperity (actually according to Daniel 11:39-43, war will bring wealth and prosperity to the King of the North. This horseman's ride is NOT constant physical warfare everywhere, through physical warfare (consistent with Jesus' words in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21).

But things will get worse.

The old WCG also put out the following in 1975:

Where is it all going to end? That was the question the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ posed in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. Christ's answer, known as the Olivet Prophecy, is quite revealing. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars," Christ said, referring to one of the prophetic signals that would herald the end of an age (verse 6).

Certainly, there have always been wars. And certainly, Christ's words had particular meaning

for that day and age. Within a few short decades Roman legions under the command of Titus sacked, burned and pillaged the city of Jerusalem.

But Jesus' warning about war was also applicable to another period in history. In the book of Revelation, Christ, speaking through the apostle John, amplified some of His previous prophetic statements. In the sixth chapter, John writes: "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Rev. 6:4).

John was not speaking about the fall of Jerusalem. That war was already some twenty years behind him. John was referring to future events that would bring 6000 years of human history crashing to a cataclysmic close. ... **John is referring to a time yet ahead of us** when "peaceful coexistence" will be a thing of the past. ...

It's no wonder that Jeremiah, in referring to these tumultuous times, stated: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble ..." (Jer. 30:7). (Ritter G. 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse - The Red Horse - War, pp. 48, 52; see also Ritter R. The War that could end it all. Good News, December 1975)

There may also be wars in parts of the world that have rarely had them (perhaps, for example, even between some South American nations), as well as wars in areas that have long been especially tense (like Korea, possibly involving other Asian nations; Azerbaijan and Armenia). Damascus ultimately will be destroyed and could be a signal for destruction to come for Jacob (Isaiah 17:1-4). There will likely be civil unrest and perhaps rioting in scales not seen before, including within some Western nations (such as in Europe and North America). This will lead to military leaders rising up in various parts of the world. And one European (the final King of the North) will, after making one or more false peace deals/pronouncements (e.g. Daniel 9:26-27; 11:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:3), become the final Beast leader (Revelation 13:4) and he will take over many nations (Daniel 11:39-43).

European “King of Europe”

The following non-biblical prophecy seems to teach that a coming “King of Europe” will be like the Beast of Revelation:

Nostradamus (16th century): As a Griffin the King of Europe shall come, Accompanied by those of Aquila. Of Reds and Whites shall lead a great army ... (Dupont, Yves. *Catholic Prophecy: The Coming Chastisement*. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), 1973, p. 105)

A Griffin is a mythological creature with parts of other animals like the head a lion, eagle’s wings, and a fish (Dupont, p. 105). One variety is known as a “sea-griffin” and tends to resemble a dragon in its appearance, so in a sense, a Griffin could be considered as a beast from the sea (cf. Revelation 13:1) which also has the mouth of a lion (cf. Daniel 7:4; Revelation 13:2). In mythology, Aquila (a constellation) was owned by the Roman god Jupiter and performed many tasks for him (Aquila. Wikipedia, accessed 02/07/11).

Thus, Nostradamus’ “King of Europe” Griffin seems to have a resemblance to the Beast of the Bible. So does the “Great Monarch”, (who is presumed to be the same person) that certain Greco-Roman Catholics have foretold:

Venerable Bartholomew Holzhauser (died 1658): The Great Monarch will have the special help of God and be unconquerable. (Connor E. *Prophecy for Today*. Imprimatur + A.J. Willinger, Bishop of Monterey-Fresno; Reprint: Tan Books and Publishers, Rockford (IL), 1984, pp. 35-36)

Thus, a powerful military leader is expected by biblical and Roman/Orthodox Catholic prophecy — though the Bible shows that the help for this “monarch” will be Satanic (Revelation 16:13), not God. The Bible foretells a European leader it calls “the Beast” (Revelation 13:3-4) and “the King of the North” (Daniel 11:40).

Since there is rebellion against the Beast/King of the North leader in Daniel 11:40, it should be clear that although this horseman begins his official ride prior to the Great Tribulation (and perhaps began it already), he ends it after it has begun.

The Bible shows that a European leader will rise up

TALKING peace, but that he will be a warring and persecution leader (Revelation 13:1-10; Daniel 11:31-44).

25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and **he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many**: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. (Daniel 8:25, KJV)

23 **And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully**, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people. 24 **He shall enter peaceably**, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time. (Daniel 11:23-24, NKJV)

So, this leader gives people the impression that there will be “peace” and is involved in some type of deal. This is the same leader is called a “prince” when he confirms the temporal covenant in Daniel 9:27 — this leader is a European.

Sorrows and the Red Horse of War

But now consider that Jesus said:

4 “Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. 6 And **you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.** 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 **All these are the beginning of sorrows.** (Matthew 24:4-8)

The old WCG published:

Actually the word “SORROWS” means “trials” or “tribulation.” So Jesus is saying these are the beginning of “tribulation” {which will lead to} — the Great Tribulation. (Antion D. *Will You Fall Away?* Good News. May-June 1968)

We are in the “beginning of sorrows.” What looks like the first horseman of the Apocalypse spreading a false interfaith and ecumenical gospel has been becoming more and more prominent on the world scene the past several years. They claim Jesus is the Christ, but do not truly act like it, and they are deceiving many.

Jesus said this would be followed by wars and rumors of war.

Comments by world leaders in the USA, North Korea, and Iran are consistent with that. There are also issues with Israel, Syria, Hong Kong, the Caucasus, the Palestinians, and parts of Africa and elsewhere.

If it has not yet started, we may be very near the time of the ride of the red horseman of the apocalypse.

The specter of war is haunting parts of the world right now. And though we expect, after conflict, to see temporary peace in places like the Middle East (cf. Daniel 9:27), many are preparing for war.

The opening of this second seal IS NOT the Great Tribulation, as that does not begin until the 5th seal of Revelation is opened (Revelation 6:9).

Jesus said that before the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21), there would that we are to expect wars, rumors of wars, and various sorrows (Matthew 24:4-8).

Anyway, world leaders, other than only the Beast of Revelation 13:1-10, are involved with this red horse.

What leads to the riding of the horsemen, including the one of war?

Satan!

7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:7-9)

12 Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a



Red Horseman of War

short time. (Revelation 12:12)

Satan deceives the world, including religiously (2 Corinthians 11:14-15), and is a factor in the ride of the white horseman and then the others.

The Warring Beast

Satan is stirring up unrest around the world. And this also includes Europe.

The Bible shows that a warring leader will arise in Europe:

1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. 2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. 4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (Revelation 13:1-4)

That sea, according to Daniel, is the “Great Sea” (Daniel 7:2-8), further identified by other scriptures to be what we now call the Mediterranean Sea (Numbers 34:6-7; Joshua 1:4; 9:1; 23:4; Ezekiel 47:13-16).

Once this Beast decides to make massive war, at first,

he will be successful.

Before then, he will likely quell unrest (or even civil war) in Europe. Because of his involvement in Daniel 9:27 and his quelling of unrest, he will be considered a peace maker.

Then, he will eventually turn against the USA and its Anglo-Saxon descended allies:

24 His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully,

And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people.

25 "Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;

And he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. (Daniel 8:24-25)

39 Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain. (Daniel 11:39)

This Beast leader, also called the King of the North, will then eliminate lands now dominated by Islam:

40 At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. 41 He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians {literally Cushites} shall follow at his heels. (Daniel 11:40-43)

He will be successful militarily for a time (cf. Revelation 13:4).

Satan will want to see more destroyed and will encourage nations to gather in Armageddon:

13 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (Revelation 9:13-16)

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Revelation 16:13-14)

16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. (Revelation 16:16)

This will not turn out well for those who so gather:

14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. (Revelation 17:14)

44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. (Daniel 2:44)

18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,

And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth. (Revelation 11:18)

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He

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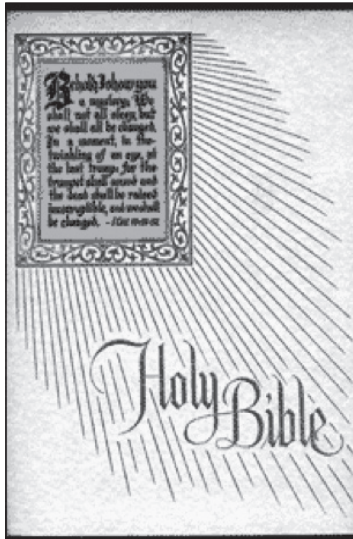
LESSON 19_B

Why a NEW Covenant?

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

Published 2020 by the *Continuing Church of God*

Preface: This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21st century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course. Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used. Additionally, Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as are other translations.



Why a NEW Covenant Is Necessary

1. Did Christ, the God of the “Old Testament,” promise that He would make a NEW covenant – A NEW MARRIAGE AGREEMENT – with Israel and Judah even before Old Covenant Israel had gone into captivity for disobeying His Law? Jeremiah 31:31. Does Hebrews 8:8 also verify this?

COMMENT: Note that the New Covenant was STILL FUTURE when Paul wrote the book of Hebrews.

2. Does the reason that a New Covenant must be made lie in the fact that there was a FAULT involved with the Old Covenant? Hebrews 8:7.
3. What was this fault – was it in the Law? Psalms 19:7 and Romans 7:12. Since the fault was NOT in the Law, which is “perfect,” nor with God who was able to keep His part of the covenant, then must

Continued on next page 8

Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 Then the beast was captured, and

with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:15-21)

Yet, even though we currently see a lot of military boasting and posturing — and much more will happen, that ultimately will fail.

We may already be in the time when the second horseman has begun his ride. The results of his ride will worsen.

He will be followed by the black horse of food inflation and famine.

Continued from previous page...

the fault have been with “them” – the people? Hebrews 8:8. Notice especially the first five and last seven words.

COMMENT: The law is PERFECT. But the PEOPLE were WEAK – SPIRITUALLY weak! Therefore, they did not KEEP THEIR PART OF THE OLD COVENANT MARRIAGE AGREEMENT. Also, the old covenant was made for mortals who might make mistakes, hence the prophecy of the 2nd covenant.

But under the terms of the NEW Covenant, what does God propose to do? (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33 and 2 Corinthians 3:3-6.)

Notice the New Living Translation of 2 Corinthians 3:3-6:

3 Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

4 We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. 5 It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. 6 He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:3-6, NLT)

COMMENT: Under the old marriage covenant, God wrote His laws 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 promises that He will make a marriage agreement only with those who are NOW having the principles of His Law written in their hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit.

REMEMBER THIS, FOR IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!! Christ will marry His “bride” – the collective members of His Church – only when she has prepared herself by PRACTICING OBEDIENCE to His law.

According to the terms of the new marriage covenant, we must first be tested and proved to see whether

we really want to obey God. The Old Covenant, remember, was made with Israel BEFORE she was fully tried and tested. The new marriage covenant will not be made until AFTER we have been tried and tested and are “born again.” Then we will be members of the SPIRITUAL Kingdom of God – Israel according to the SPIRIT, no longer possessing sinful human nature.

The New Covenant is a far BETTER covenant than the Old Covenant was. The OLD Covenant was NATIONAL – TO ONE NATION ONLY – to Israel. It promised ONLY TEMPORARY MATERIAL EARTHLY BLESSINGS. IT HAD NO PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ETERNAL LIFE. The Old Covenant Israelites had no promise of receiving the Holy Spirit which could have written God’s law in their hearts and minds.

But the NEW Covenant marriage agreement into which we can enter will COMPLETELY REMEDY the fault of the Old Covenant by making it possible for us to obey God’s law PERFECTLY in its spiritual intent! For at the resurrection, Christ’s Spirit-born Church will be given a completely NEW nature – the SPIRITUAL nature of God – which will enable born-again Christians to obey Him PERFECTLY forever! (1 John 3:9.) It is then that Christ will marry His PERFECTLY OBEDIENT Church.

Terms of the New Covenant

1. Is the “Lord” the MESSENGER who came to herald the terms of the New Covenant? (Malachi 3:1, last part.) Was this messenger JESUS CHRIST? (Mark 1:14.)
2. Is the message of this New Covenant obviously a part of the GOSPEL MESSAGE – the good news – Christ preached? (Mark 1:1, 14, 15.) Is repentance and belief in the Gospel a part of what modern spiritual Israelites must do in order to enter into this New Covenant with Christ? Verse 15. Does Matthew 15:24 verify the fact that Christ was sent only to the “lost” – the SCATTERED – “SHEEP” or people of ISRAEL to herald the Gospel of the Kingdom? But did Christ LATER instruct His DISCIPLES to preach the Gospel – which contains the message of the NEW Covenant – to ALL THE WORLD? (Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20.)
3. Do Gentiles now have any hope of ever being partakers of the promises of the covenants – the promises contained in the covenants made with

Abraham and the promises of the New Covenant? (Ephesians 2:11, 12.) In what way may a Gentile – one having no blood relationship to Abraham – come into the New Covenant relationship? (Ephesians 2:13; Galatians 3:29 and Romans 11:13, 17, 25.)

COMMENT: In past lessons we learned how a Gentile may come into the New Covenant relationship: “And IF you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and HEIRS according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). The New Covenant is, in this way, open to ALL peoples of the world.

Notice that this New Covenant is **CONDITIONAL** – “if.” Both Israelites and Gentiles must **SURRENDER THEMSELVES** to Christ and begin learning to **OBEY HIM** (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

But the New Covenant marriage, **UNLIKE** the Old Covenant, is actually **PRECEDED** by a **WILL** – that is, a **TESTAMENT**.

4. Did Jesus leave a “testament,” or **WILL**, at His death? (Hebrews 9:15-17, KJV.) What is the purpose of Christ’s will?

COMMENT: As we learned in Lesson 18, a **TESTAMENT** IS a **WILL** – it declares a person’s **WILL** as to the disposal of his **POSSESSIONS** after his **DEATH**.

Christ left, at His death, a will – a **TESTAMENT** – in which all people may become beneficiaries or heirs of His possessions. For it was to the **ONE** seed – **CHRIST** – to whom this earth was given as an eternal inheritance (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16-19).

Christ was the only One who ever obeyed God’s Law perfectly and could claim the earth as an inheritance. So it was He who could, and did, leave a **TESTAMENT** or **WILL** at His death so that His “heirs” (Galatians 3:29) may also receive, through Him, eternal inheritance of the earth.

Bear in mind that the new **TESTAMENT** or **WILL** of Jesus Christ has been in force since His death. But His testament or will has **CONDITIONS** which we must meet **BEFORE** we can inherit the promises.

The Greek word for “testament” also means “covenant.” Since the new **TESTAMENT** involves our agreement to fulfill these conditions, it also becomes

a **COVENANT** – and that new covenant will not be confirmed or established with us – we won’t **INHERIT** the promises of eternal inheritance of the earth and sonship in the ruling, spiritual Kingdom of God – **UNTIL** we are first made **IMMORTAL** and have God’s nature so we **CAN’T SIN!** (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:9.)

Let’s look at the Greek word translated as covenant:

Lexicon :: Strong’s G1242 - diathēkē

The KJV translates Strong’s G1242 in the following manner:

covenant (20x), testament (13x).

I. a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid, the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will

II. a compact, a covenant, a testament

A. God’s covenant with Noah, etc.

(www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1242&t=KJV)

For the question of the death of either party to that covenant did **NOT** enter into the agreement as it would, had it been a **WILL** – a **TESTAMENT**. The Old Covenant was simply an **AGREEMENT** – “YOU do this and I’ll do that.”

The second part of the Bible would then naturally bear the title, “**THE NEW COVENANT**” – the **NEW AGREEMENT** – for it reveals fully the **NEW COVENANT** which God offers to the present-day blood descendants of old Israel, and to **ALL** people of the earth through Christ.

Also, this latter part of the Bible could bear within its title the word “**TESTAMENT**,” **FOR** “if we are Christ’s, we are [considered as] Abraham’s seed and [by Christ’s **DEATH**] **HEIRS** of the promises” to be **ESTABLISHED** by the New Covenant.

SO – **PROPERLY** the title of the second part of the Bible should be, “**THE NEW COVENANT AND TESTAMENT**.” The Greek, in which this latter part of the Bible was originally written, uses the Greek title “**Diatheke**” which is translated **INTERCHANGEABLY** as “**COVENANT**” AND “**TESTAMENT**.”

New Covenant Not Yet Completed

1. Is Jesus Christ the minister of the New Covenant? (Hebrews 8:6.) Will Christ COMPLETE His work of confirming the New Covenant in the future? Same verse. (Also, Hebrews 8:10 and Jeremiah 31:31-34.)

COMMENT: A “day” in the prophecy of Daniel 9:27 represents a year in fulfillment (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:3-6).

The late COG evangelist Dr. Herman Hoeh stated:

The New Testament is not a legal restatement of the law. There are some people who think that somehow Mathew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Paul’s Epistles, the Epistles of John Peter, of course James, Jude, and Revelation contain a written statement of what the new covenant is like. That is step by step all the terms of the new covenant are written down. There isn’t any such thing. There isn’t a single chapter written in the New Testament that gives the points of the law. That is supposed to be written in our hearts and minds in the form of a covenant. Because in fact the covenant hasn’t yet been written up. Jeremiah 31 says the covenant is yet to be made when Christ comes back and He hasn’t returned. Jesus addressed the question verbally in Matthew chapter 5, 6 and 7. In addressing the question verbally, He said don’t expect to find in what we call the New Testament a letter of the law restatement. Instead you go back and see what we have in Hebrew the Old Testament. We have it in English or whatever language we read. And you look at it. And you evaluate it. And you evaluate it in terms of the examples I have set. You close the loopholes. And you lift any burdens. And Jesus explained in Matt 5 how you close the loopholes. How to look in the mirror and see the law more clearly than ever before. Because you have the opportunity to have the Spirit of God so you can look at the law of God, the Ten Commandments, the civil laws that God stated through Moses and you can see their intent and purpose. And Jesus says that there are some of us who are going to be keeping and teaching even the least points, and there are some who are going to neglect keeping them.

Through Jesus, ALL PEOPLE called can now enter into the New Covenant and become HEIRS “according to the promise” which God made to Abraham (Galatians 3:29).

When Jesus returns to this earth He will FULFILL the covenant He made with Abraham. Abraham and his SPIRITUAL seed through Christ will then inherit the world and eternal life. Jesus will also ESTABLISH the covenant He made with His spiritual Church BEFORE His return by MARRYING THE CHURCH!

The Old Testament prophesied the Messiah would proclaim the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31).

The New Testament shows related to Jesus:

28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:6)

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Hebrews 8:6-10)

2. Does Revelation 19:7-9 describe the glorious MARRIAGE of Christ, the “Lamb,” to His purified, SINLESS Church when He returns? Read also 2 Corinthians 11:2.

COMMENT: All who are born again as spirit beings

will, at Christ's second coming, be OFFICIALLY invited to enter into the New Covenant marriage relationship with Him as their husband. This is the way Christ will ESTABLISH or COMPLETE the New Covenant with THEM.

Christ to REMARRY His "Wife"!

Some may ask, "How can Jesus Christ marry the New Testament Church since He was already married to ancient Israel under the Old Covenant?"

The fact is Jesus Christ is no longer bound by marriage to ancient Israel! That marriage contract has been dissolved! He is now free, according to the laws governing marriage, to marry AGAIN. Notice how.

1. After ancient Israel had disobeyed God's law, followed the customs of the heathen and served their false gods, did the Lord Christ plead with them to turn from their ADULTEROUS ways? (Jeremiah 3:14.) Did God "put away" – DIVORCE – Israel because of her sins? (Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:6, 8 and Isaiah 59:1-2.)

COMMENT: When ancient Israel broke God's marriage covenant, they were actually committing SPIRITUAL "adultery." They followed the customs of heathen peoples and worshipped their pagan idols instead of the LORD Christ, who was their "Husband."

Because God is HOLY, He does not "co-exist" with sin! Therefore He was forced to separate His "wife" – ancient Israel – from Himself (Isaiah 50:1).

Even though God had given Israel a bill of divorcement for her sins, God was, however, not free to "marry" again according to the Law! Because the Eternal said, "I AM [STILL] MARRIED TO YOU" (Jeremiah 3:14).

The LORD – the human Jesus Christ of the New Testament – was still bound by His part of the conditions of the marriage contract.

These conditions were, however, limited by DEATH! Only the death of one of the partners of a marriage covenant can sever the marriage relationship – for marriage is binding until death, as we learned in the previous lesson.

Jesus Christ's death on the stake at Golgotha freed Him from His first marriage contract with ancient

Israel. The Lord Christ of the Old Testament – God in the FLESH – had died! Now He is free to marry a repentant, forgiven, sin-free "spiritual Israel" – the New Testament Church BORN AGAIN – when He returns!

2. Who will Jesus marry when He returns? (Revelation 19:7.) Notice the words "his wife."

COMMENT: Jesus promises to make a NEW COVENANT – A NEW MARRIAGE AGREEMENT – when He returns. That new marriage contract will be made with "spiritual" Israel – converted Israelites and Gentiles – now born of the Spirit.

This time His wife will remain faithful. Why? Because at the resurrection she will have been born as a perfect spiritual nation into the Kingdom of God. Once born of God, their new SPIRITUAL nature and power will enable them to keep His laws PERFECTLY – the same laws which are still the terms and conditions of the marriage agreement – the New Covenant – Christ will make with His spiritual Church!

Christ Came So We Can KEEP the Law

Some believe Christ came to "do away with the law."

Most people are totally ignorant of the MOST VITAL KNOWLEDGE they should know. Those who have set themselves up as ministers have not taught the people the truth, nor do they themselves know it.

1. Did Christ come to "do away with the law" – to "nail the law to the cross"? What did Christ, HIMSELF, say? HE should know WHY He came. What are HIS words? (Matthew 5:17.) Do verses 18 and 19 also show He did NOT come to destroy the law? On what two great things does Christ say "hang ALL the law"? (Matthew 22:40, 37-39.)

COMMENT: God's great Royal Law of Love has always existed. It, with its ten points – the Ten Commandments – was in effect from the Garden of Eden. The law stands fast FOREVER. Love of God as revealed by His law will never become obsolete (Psalms 111:7, 8, KJV, NLT). It is the people who have been unable to bring themselves into harmony with this highest of all laws!!

Christ here REPEATS twice for EMPHASIS that He did

NOT come to destroy – to do away with – the law.

2. On the other hand, what DID Christ say He came to DO? (Matthew 5:17, last nine words.) What did Christ MEAN by the words, “I AM COME ... TO FULFILL”? See comment.

COMMENT: CHRIST “FULFILLED THE LAW” PERFECTLY BY OBEYING IT! Obviously by Christ’s “fulfilling” of the Law He did NOT ANNUL THE LAW! He DEMONSTRATED the POWER of the Holy Spirit of God which, if placed within someone, enables them to fulfill – to keep – the spiritual law. For with God ALL things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)

Let’s look a little at the Greek term translated as fulfill:

Lexicon :: Strong’s G4137 – plēroō

Outline of Biblical Usage [?]

- I. to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full
 - A. to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally
 - i. I abound, I am liberally supplied
- II. to render full, i.e. to complete
 - A. to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim
 - B. to consummate: a number
 - i. to make complete in every particular, to render perfect
 - ii. to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)
 - C. to carry into effect, bring to realisation, realise
 - i. of matters of duty: to perform, execute
 - ii. of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish
 - iii. to fulfil, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment

(www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G4137&t=KJV)

Christ was the first-begotten of many brethren. He was a mortal human being, just as you and I, but He was BEGOTTEN of the Holy Spirit of God at his PHYSICAL conception, whereas with you and me, begetting by the Holy Spirit comes LATER in life – after we have repented of sin, accepted Christ’s sacrifice for our sins, and been baptized (Acts 2:38).

Christ came to pay with His own life the penalty of our sins, which is ETERNAL death. He makes it POSSIBLE for us to receive the Holy Spirit of POWER whereby we can FULFILL THE LAW also, and thereby ultimately enter into the NEW Covenant relationship with Him!

Who does God grant His Holy Spirit to?

Those who OBEY HIM according to Acts 5:32.

With the advent of the NEW Covenant promise of the Holy Spirit WITH WHICH to keep the Law, God can NOW MAGNIFY – ENLARGE – His commandments from the keeping of the LAW IN the letter, as commanded under the OLD Covenant, to the original intent that God desired from the beginning in the Garden of Eden.

God can NOW require the keeping of the law in the SPIRIT – in its SPIRITUAL intent. This is utterly IMPOSSIBLE for carnal humans WITHOUT God’s Spirit!! But humans can have the SPIRITUAL POWER of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this feat, IF they will surrender to God!

And so Christ also came to MAGNIFY the law. This is WHY He said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old [by God’s law-givers under the OLD Covenant], ‘You shall not commit adultery’ [PHYSICALLY]. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her [MENTALLY] HAS ALREADY COMMITTED adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). NOW it is counted a sin if one lets the THOUGHT of adultery enter the mind, or lets it dwell on sinful acts of any other kind.

In these two ways, then, Christ came to “fulfill the Law”: HE, Himself, fulfilled it by OBEYING it, and has made it possible for “whomsoever will” to fulfill or obey it in the SPIRIT, as well as the letter!

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus taught every one of the Ten Commandments (see also our free book, online at ccog.org, The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast).

Preparation We Must Make as Prospective Bride

1. What PURPOSE has the Old Covenant period served?

COMMENT: It has been necessary for God to MAKE HUMANS REALIZE, through centuries of experience, the ageless fact that true happiness comes only by living in accordance with God's great eternal law of love; and to make humans realize that they are utterly incapable of doing so by their own power.

The OLD Covenant has done just that! Down through the centuries the Israelites have been known as the nation of God. Yet we know that Israel never did keep His law. Thus, Israel has become an example to the people of the world that all of CARNAL humankind, of themselves, cannot keep God's law either.

But now God has sent His Son to this unhappy and sin-ridden world with the joyful news – the “Good News” – of the arrival of His spiritual power, and the announcement of a NEW Covenant. A covenant whereby we can be BEGOTTEN again, GROW again and, at Christ's coming, be BORN AGAIN – this time having a NEW and TOTALLY DIFFERENT nature – a SPIRITUAL NATURE!

2. Each of us must now receive the HOLY SPIRIT which will set in motion the CHANGES that must occur within us before we can be “born again” with the spirit body and HOLY spiritual NATURE we must have so Christ can ESTABLISH His new marriage covenant with us.

But what, in detail, are the conditions we must fulfill in order to RECEIVE the Holy Spirit necessary to help bring about these changes? What does Christ say you must do now in order to receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38 and 5:32.

COMMENT: Here you have the very essence of what you must do now to become a member of the Church which Christ will marry at His coming. Three things are necessary for you to do NOW IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT which places you in His Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). You MUST REPENT, BELIEVE, AND BE BAPTIZED!

But exactly what does all this mean? Let's understand:

FIRST: You must “REPENT” – be totally broken up about and SORRY for your old SINFUL WAY of life, and COMPLETELY SURRENDER YOURSELF to the LOVING RULE of God – for God will save NO ONE He cannot rule.

Christ PURCHASES true Christians with His blood which He shed on the stake for the penalty of their sins so that they need not die eternal death. That is, CHRIST PURCHASES THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO PREPARE NOW TO ENTER INTO THE NEW COVENANT WITH HIM at His coming, and He has promised now to place the Holy Spirit within them.

Those who agree to enter into the New Covenant with Christ thereby agree to become Christ's PURCHASED SERVANTS – they agree to do His will. And, as “SERVANTS OF CHRIST, doing the will of God,” you will be doing His will this time – unlike those under the Old Covenant – “from the HEART” (Ephesians 6:6). For God will, under the terms of the New Covenant, be inscribing His law “in the fleshly tables of your heart” (Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 11:19-20), by His Holy Spirit within you! (2 Corinthians 3:3.)

SECOND: You must BELIEVE that Christ is your Savior, and your present High Priest, and coming Ruler. And you must BELIEVE He will send the Holy Spirit of POWER to help you CRUSH OUT your old carnal nature and CHANGE YOU.

Christ, by paying with His life for the sins of all humankind, has made it possible for ALL to enter into ETERNAL life. No wonder when we look at the FAILURE of the Israelites to keep the law under the Old Covenant, we realize that we need a Savior – Christ – to pay for our sins and send us His power. We realize the LESSONS of the Old Covenant have been OUR “schoolmaster” to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24, KJV). And that it is only right and proper that we acknowledge Him as our Redeemer, our coming Ruler and King, and our HUSBAND!

THIRD: YOU must BE BAPTIZED.

SO, TO SUMMARIZE, YOU must: (1) repent, (2) believe, (3) be baptized.

AFTER YOU have done this, what does GOD promise to do, according to the terms of Christ's Will or Testament? “... and you SHALL receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit”!! (Acts 2:38.) This is what God PROMISES to do as His part.

There it is!

This is the spirit of POWER that came upon the apostles just after Christ’s death (Acts 2:4). And THESE are the prior requirements for entering into the new covenant relationship with Christ at the resurrection – at His soon coming. It is then that we will inherit all the other marvelous things that the New Covenant promises – eternal life, sonship in the Kingdom of God, and the earth as an EVERLASTING possession.

The Holy Spirit imparts the POWER WE need to PREPARE OURSELVES NOW SO we can receive all of these blessings!

The Decision Is Yours

If you intend to enter into the New Covenant marriage with Christ, you should begin PREPARATION NOW! Later may be TOO LATE. But the decision is YOURS to make. God will not force you. He leaves you free to CHOOSE. Notice:

1. When God offered the Old Covenant to ancient Israel, did He coerce them into entering this covenant with Him, or did He allow them to VOLUNTARILY DECIDE whether they would enter into it? Exodus 19:3, 5-8. Notice the word “IF” in verse 5.

COMMENT: The word “IF” shows that God did NOT force the people of ancient Israel to enter into the Old Covenant with Him.

2. Did God coerce the NEXT generation of Israelites, forty years later, to enter this same Covenant with Him, or did He allow them to CHOOSE whether or not they would do so? Deuteronomy 30:19. Note the words, “CHOOSE life.”

COMMENT: Christ will not force anyone into entering a covenant with Him. Nor will He force you into a decision to START PREPARING to enter the New Covenant with Him at His coming. Why?

God created humankind with abilities like His own – beings with MINDS like His own, though limited – beings who can CHOOSE – beings who are FREE MORAL AGENTS, and who are not mere automatons

like the rest of His creation.

Christ never did FORCE anyone to covenant with Him, and He never will! For He is in the process of forming beings who are LEARNING TO CHOOSE CORRECTLY! They are the ones who will become God’s SUPREME SPIRITUAL CREATION!

God will ADVISE though – He says, “choose LIFE.” YOU also are a free moral agent just as were the former generations to which the other covenant – the Old Covenant – was offered. What will be YOUR choice?

The NEW Covenant promises life – ETERNAL life – and a close relationship with Christ as His collective bride. And all the other blessings that will attend this high calling.

What are you going to do NOW about the New Covenant which is to be offered when Christ comes? If you CHOOSE NOT to prepare yourself now for entry into this Covenant by refusing to allow God to place His SPIRIT of eternal life within you, you will NOT be changed into a spirit being at Christ’s soon coming.

God will not make the NEW marriage covenant with you if you remain a HUMAN being. In order to attend the wedding supper of the Lamb, you must be “born again” as a SPIRIT being – just as God is!

Persistent refusal to submit to God and begin preparation can only lead to ETERNAL DEATH!

The time is NOW AT HAND for you to make a decision. THINK DEEPLY on this matter as you meditate on this lesson and the lessons just ahead. These will continue to give God’s revealed instruction on HOW YOU can finally enter into the New Covenant, HUSBAND-WIFE relationship with the living Jesus Christ, your Redeemer.

God Works Through His Church

The evidence is now crystal clear that in order to INHERIT eternal life you must also stand ready to enter into this New Covenant relationship with Christ. That’s the only way to be born again of the life-giving Holy Spirit of God, and inherit all the promises of God.

But to whom should you turn for guidance in preparing yourself now so you will be ready to enter into the New Covenant marriage with Christ at His now imminent

return? Does God have a CHURCH on earth today from which you can receive this special guidance? Or do you suppose you can qualify to enter into the New Covenant relationship with Christ through attending just ANY church?

Does God leave you in the dark about this vital knowledge? Or does He clearly point out to you the fact that He does have a Church, and show you how you can IDENTIFY it from over 450 DIFFERING sects and denominations in the world today?

WHICH church? – that is the question of all-encompassing importance! The Bible plainly gives the answer to this question, too. Let's understand what it says.

1. Long before Moses and Mount Sinai, did God have a PRIEST upon the earth who REPRESENTED HIM, and carried out His work? Genesis 14:18-19. Also review in Lesson 7, Ending Your Financial Troubles, from question 5 onwards.
2. Later, did God call Moses to be His SERVANT? Exodus 3:11-12. Did God have MOSES deliver the terms of the Old Covenant to the Israelites at Mount Sinai? Exodus 19:3-8; 21:1 and 24:3.
3. Wasn't it ANOTHER MORTAL FLESH-AND-BLOOD HUMAN BEING – Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:9, 14) – who came to announce, for God, the terms of the New Covenant to the people of His time, and to the world? Malachi 3:1 and Mark 1:14.

COMMENT: God uses HUMAN BEINGS to represent Him in His religious dealings with other human beings upon the earth. After God personally gave the Ten Commandments to the people at Mount Sinai, it was a HUMAN BEING, Moses who gave the terms of the Old Covenant to the people for God. Then God used Christ, in His HUMAN form, to announce the conditions of the New Covenant. And TODAY God uses certain human beings to represent Him in his dealings with humans (see also Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The Gospel is the message about the soon-to-be established KINGDOM of God on earth. The gospel message THEREFORE includes the NEW COVENANT MESSAGE whereby "born again" people may covenant with Christ to rule the world with Him in a husband-wife relationship in the future, spirit-governed

Kingdom of God.

4. Christ, Himself, was here on this earth but a short time. Is it true that CHRIST FOUNDED A CHURCH TO CARRY THE MESSAGE OF THIS NEW COVENANT ON DOWN TO PEOPLE THROUGH ALL THE AGES SO they could receive the Holy Spirit and thus prepare to enter the Kingdom at His soon coming? Matthew 16:18.
5. Was this Church to be composed of many DIFFERENT denominations? Or was it to be but ONE CHURCH? Same verse. Was this TRUE church to have the "keys" to the Kingdom – the knowledge of HOW to ENTER the Kingdom of God? Verse 19.

COMMENT: One of THE MOST IMPORTANT KEYS is to know that there IS TO BE a New Covenant and know HOW to enter into it – to know how to KEEP YOUR PART of it so that God may forever fulfill His part. The church you need to be in is the one that has this vital "key"!

6. After the New Covenant was made known, when did the PROMISED Holy Spirit first enter into those who knew how to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-4. By the entrance of the Holy Spirit into these people – by being spiritually begotten of God – were they thus PUT WITHIN THE "BODY" OF CHRIST – the Church of God? 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.

COMMENT: These people, by surrendering their wills to God, and by having God's Spirit placed within them, became the MEMBERS OF His spiritual body – the Church of God. They became the members of His body just like the members of your body – your eyes, arms, legs – are members of your physical body and subject to your will. Here is the origin of the first true SPIRITUAL CHURCH OF GOD ON THE EARTH!

7. Don't the following references clearly show that God's TRUE Church should bear the name "CHURCH OF GOD"? Read and write out each of these vital PROOFS: Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 10:32, 11:22, 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5 and Galatians 1:13.
8. Down through the ages, since Christ's time, has there been a very small group which has

continued as the executors and administrators of things concerning God's New Covenant and will? Revelation 1:20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 8.

COMMENT: These seven actual Churches mentioned here existed in the time of the apostles. But they also represent the seven eras of the true Church of God in its successive stages on down from the time of the apostles into our day. These Churches are traceable through history!

Those of us in the Continuing Church of God consider ourselves to be the spiritual descendants of the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans (as well as the early faithful in Antioch) and clearly can document a succession of leaders from the 1st through early 3rd centuries. We in the CCOG also consider that we represent the most faithful remnant of the Philadelphia era of the COG continuing at this time (cf. Hebrews 13:1; Revelation 3:7-13).

It is only the true Church of God that has the type of spiritual succession and continuity to the original faith of the apostles that those associated with the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic faiths claim to have. (Be sure to download your free copy of the REVEALING book, "Continuing History of the Church of God" at www.ccog.org.)

The Continuing Church of God

The proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14) as well as to teach all that Jesus taught (Matthew 28:19-2) is the great commission of God's church today. The gospel message is to be carried to all corners of the earth just before Christ comes.

SALVATION only comes God's way (cf. Acts 4:12; 16:31; Psalm 62:1; 2 Timothy 1:9). And He uses His Church – the church HIS Spirit is in – to properly preach that (cf. Romans 10:14-15).

As the terms of the New Covenant are a part of our Savior's Testament or WILL, the TRUE Church of God today is helping serve as an EXECUTOR OR ADMINISTRATOR of this will by which we may obtain the Holy Spirit for entrance into God's Kingdom.

The very fact that God's Church knows WHY this Will was made – its TRUE intent and purpose –

together with the proof that it is the TRUE Church God established for executing this Will, makes His ministers its executors! Christ gave His apostles the keys of true UNDERSTANDING, which unlock the door to the KINGDOM OF GOD (cf. Matthew 16:19).

God's true Church is not a shouting, senseless "pentecostal"-type of church. God's Spirit is "the Spirit of a sound mind" (1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Timothy 1:7), in a sound church which has the true understanding of the Kingdom.

1. There is a SPECIAL Spirit in God's Church – the HOLY Spirit of God. For by His Spirit we are baptized into HIS Church. But does Paul WARN YOU about receiving a DIFFERENT "spirit"? 2 Corinthians 11:4.

COMMENT: This DIFFERENT spirit is the spirit of "anti-Christ" (1 John 2:18, 4:3). It is AGAINST Christ. It SPLITS groups into DENOMINATIONS. It IS NOT the UNITING Holy Spirit of God.

Do NOT make the fatal mistake of attempting to COVENANT with God through the WRONG church. If you do, the apostle John here warns you will receive the WRONG SPIRIT. YOU will be led into NOT keeping the commands of God as revealed in His Word, the Bible.

2. Are other warnings given against attempting to covenant with God through false churches? Mark 13:6.

COMMENT: MANY – not the few, but MANY – will come in Christ's name, thus FALSELY classifying themselves as CHRISTIANS, and will thus DECEIVE the MANY!

Remember that after you are begotten by God's Spirit, you must GROW SPIRITUALLY. IF you choose the WRONG church through which to covenant with God, you will be fed the WRONG spiritual food. You can wilt then DIE SPIRITUALLY if you are fed this wrong spiritual food – for it is poisonous! Understand that the true Christian church is NOT Protestant (see the free online book, Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism), nor is it Greco-Roman Catholic (see the free online book, Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church).

Finally, always keep in mind that God's final WARNING MESSAGE WILL GO TO ALL THE EARTH. We in the Continuing Church of God are using modern

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

The following is in our free book, online at ccog.org, title *The Mystery of God's Plan*:

If Jesus came so that we could have life "more abundantly" (John 10:10), does God allow suffering?

Yes.

Is there a purpose for it?

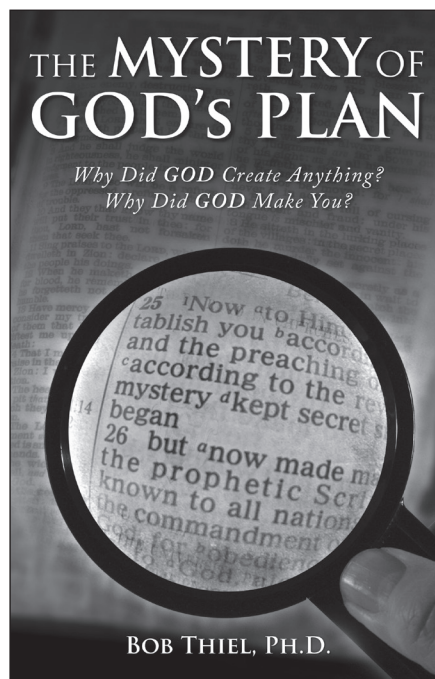
Yes.

31 For the Lord will not cast off forever. 32 Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. 33 For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men. (Lamentations 3:31-33)

Notice that God does not willingly afflict nor grieve us. He wants us to do well (cf. 3 John 2).

Seemingly bad things happen to decent people.

Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15), but suffered for us (1 Peter 2:21). And "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."



(Hebrews 5:8)

Why does God allow humans to suffer?

There are a couple of reasons. One is as punishment for or result of our sins to encourage us to not sin and to turn back to God (Lamentations 3:39-40; Leviticus 26:18). And, we should understand that the Bible teaches that God punishes us less than our iniquities deserve (cf. Ezra 9:13; Job 11:6). Now, even people who believe at least those parts of the Bible, realize that.

But there is another, more complicated, reason.

The Apostle Paul tells us that "the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope." (Romans 8:20) He also wrote:

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal

Continued on next page 18

technology to work towards the fulfilment of Matthew 24:14, Matthew 28:19-20 and Romans 11:25 as we also prepare for the short work of Romans 9:28. We recognize that the final phase of the work has many parts, but we are leading the parts that we can. We are warning the world about what is going to happen.

We have reached tens of millions of people in over 220 countries and territories through the internet, online television, radio, personal contact, and the printed word.

Some churches of the Greco-Roman-Protestant forms have **WRONGLY APPROPRIATED** God's **TRUE** Church

name "Church of God," just as they have **WRONGLY APPROPRIATED** Christ's name – Christian.

The Philadelphian remnant which is faithfully carrying out God's Work on earth today is the Continuing Church of God, with world headquarters address: 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, CA 93433 (United States of America).

Consider these facts as you learn more, in the lessons just ahead, about entering into the New Covenant with Jesus Christ at His second coming!

Remember, if you are being called of God, the decision to enter into God's Covenant **IS UP TO YOU!**

Continued from previous page...

weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

People are in the process of being refined — which includes grief and affliction — yet there is hope. Those not called in this age are refined one way (Isaiah 48:10; Jeremiah 9:7), whereas those called are to be refined and purified more like silver and/or gold (Zechariah 13:9; Psalm 66:10; Daniel 11:35, 12:10; 1 Peter 1:7; cf. Revelation 3:18). Hence there are “fiery” trials in this age (1 Peter 1:7; 4:12).

There is a hope for what will be better:

9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:9-12)

Thus, we are to be patient and confident that God’s ways will result in “better things”.

Sometimes people suffer for doing good:

17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:17)

Note that the above does NOT SAY it is the will of God to inflict suffering on ourselves so that we would be miserable.

Now, the Bible is clear that there are benefits that will arise from the suffering that afflicts us:

3 Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. (Ecclesiastes 7:3-4)

16 The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, testifying that we are the children of God. 17 Now if we are children, we are also heirs — truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. (Romans 8:16-17, AFV)

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; 12 For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11-12)

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Suffering is allowed so that people will be corrected, be trained, build character, and be better from it (see also Romans 5:3-4, 8:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5;

James 1:2-4; 2 Peter 1:5-8; Revelation 21:7-8). Trials and problems help build faith, teach humility, teach us lessons, and can help us draw closer to God.

While it can seem overwhelming now, God understands and makes it so His people can bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus essentially taught to take it one day at a time (Matthew 6:34). And what He has planned in the future is so beyond what physical sufferings will be in this life (Romans 8:18).

Jesus and God's people have suffered:

1 Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, leaving behind all the weight of the sin which surrounds us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who having been offered joy, endured the cross {Gr. stauros – stake}, despising the shame and was seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be wearied in your souls and faint. (Hebrews 12:1-3, Jubilee Bible)

Suffering will end:

12 ... Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more; 13 For now I will break off his yoke from you, And burst your bonds apart. (Nahum 1:12-13)

While this was given as a prophesy related to Nineveh, other scriptures confirm that suffering will end (Revelation 21:4) and the yoke of Satan will be broken (Isaiah 14:12-17; Revelation 20:1-3).

It needs to be pointed out that suffering does not always result from our actions. We, like Jesus, can suffer wrongfully:

19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22

“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; (1 Peter 2:19-23)

Jesus set an example to us about suffering (1 Peter 2:21-24). As did the prophets (James 5:10-11).

We are to imitate Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-24), as well as the prophet Paul (1 Corinthians 13:2) as he imitated Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Children

What about children who suffer?

The Bible tells of children who suffer. At least one man was born blind so “that the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:3). But the other reason is so that they will build character as well.

God has a plan for us, even before we are born:

16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. (Psalm 139:16)

What about children who die, are aborted, or killed at an early age?

While those are human tragedies, God has a plan for them — He has not forgotten them (cf. Isaiah 49:15). They, like others uncalled and unchosen in this age, will be part of the second resurrection (Revelation 20:5, 11). And, the Bible says that they will live again — but that time for 100 years per Isaiah 65:20.

Moving Towards Perfection

In the Old Testament, Moses wrote that God's “work is perfect” (Deuteronomy 32:4). In the New Testament, the Apostle James wrote:

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be

given to him. (James 1:2-5)

Suffering looks to be part of moving towards perfection. This DOES NOT mean we are to torture ourselves intentionally like some do, but to patiently endure the trials and sufferings we encounter.

And yes, that is easier to write than to experience — and God knows this (cf. Hebrews 12:11):

8 The Lord will perfect that which concerns me;
(Psalm 138:8)

God is working to perfect YOU!

Consider that the Bible teaches Jesus learned obedience from suffering:

8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9)

His followers should learn that as well.

Jesus taught:

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Does that mean Christians are now perfect?

No.

The Apostle John clearly taught that true Christians still sin and need forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10).

So, does this mean that Christians should just conclude since this is impossible, that it is okay not to try?

No.

Christians are to overcome with God's help (Romans 12:21; Philippians 4:13; 1 John 4:4) the tests and trials in this life, which helps bring us closer to perfection (James 1:2-4).

The Apostle Paul, while suffering from an affliction, related something Jesus told him:

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

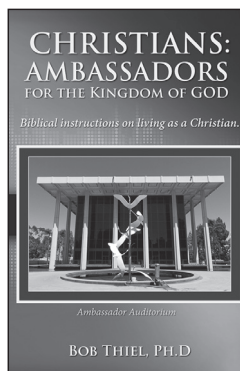
We are being perfected now through what we go through.

It is when Christians are resurrected as God's children that they will be fully perfected (cf. Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 11:40).

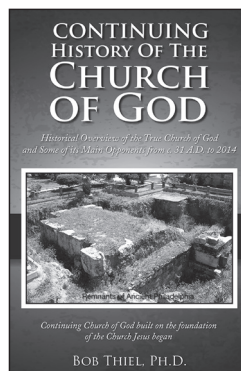
Yes, something better is instore. To learn more about part of what, check out the next article.



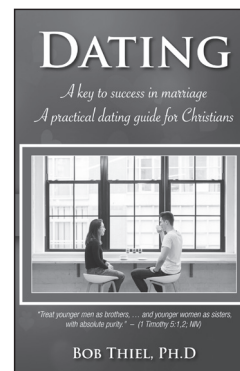
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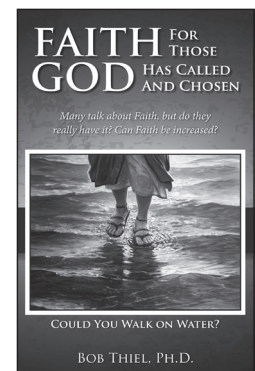
Christians:
AMBASSADORS



Continuing History of the
Church of God



Dating: A Key to Success
in Marriage



Faith for Those God
has Called and Chosen

Why Did God Make You?

*The following is in our free book, online at ccog.org, title *The Mystery of God's Plan*:*

What is your purpose?

YOU are not the same as anyone else. The Bible teaches that "all the members do not have the same function ... individually ... God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased" (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:18).

So, you are different. Your destiny is unique and important. Your life has meaning.

What is the biblical meaning of your life?

Who are you?

YOU are one who can give love in a unique way.

And that is something you will be able to do eternally.

In the middle of the last century, the Church of God (Seventh Day) published:

The Christian lives not only for today; he anticipates a better tomorrow. (What the Church of God Believes. The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom. October 3, 1949, p. 7)

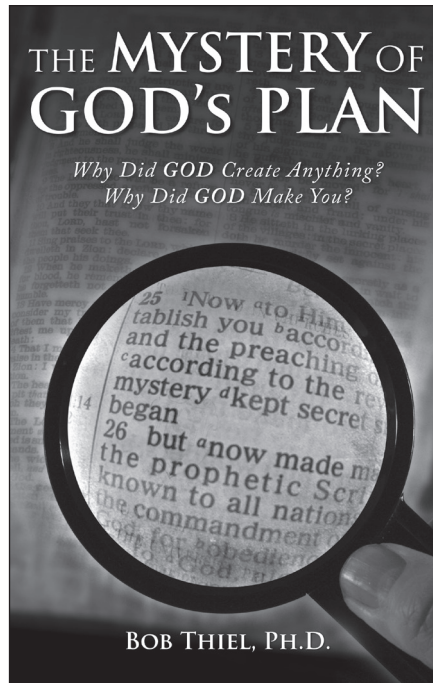
But a Christian does not simply anticipate a better tomorrow. A true Christian builds character now through the tests, opportunities, and trials in life (cf. Romans 5:1-4) which will help the Christian be able to personally contribute to the "better tomorrow."

Ultimately God has special plans for YOU personally.

God made you to give love in your own individual way (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:20-13:10).

But how?

Essentially, by now living by faith and obedience to



God in this life.

By being obedient, making biblical choices, having faith, practicing love, and enduring to the end, Christians will not only build character but make eternity better for themselves and others.

As far as faith goes, since God's existence is a fact (cf. Romans 1:20; see also the free book, available at ccog.org, Is God's Existence Logical?), it does not take faith to believe that there is a God. Even the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19). However, it does take faith to trust, believe, and obey God. That is part of the "mystery of faith" (cf. 1

Timothy 3:9; more on faith can be found in the free booklet, available online at ccog.org, Faith for Those God has Called and Chosen).

God grants His Holy Spirit to those who "obey Him" (Acts 5:32). That, God's Spirit, is what makes one a real Christian (Romans 8:9-11).

Christians, themselves, later will be changed and perfected at the first resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; Revelation 20:5-6) in order to help give love and actually make eternity better. This resurrection coincides with the seventh and last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52), which is the time part of the mystery of God will be finished (Revelation 10:7).

The Apostle Paul referred to the change itself as "a mystery" (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Those who are currently non-Christian will have this opportunity for change after they are resurrected later (see also the free book, online at ccog.org, Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation).

Do Good

God is good (Mark 10:18; Psalm 143:10) and does what

is right (cf. Genesis 18:25).

God also wants us to do good as this pleases Him (Psalm 34:14; Hebrews 13:16).

19 You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 32:19)

9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)

5 ... God, 6 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; (Romans 2:5-7)

God wants good for you and if you truly love and “obey Him” (Acts 5:32; Hebrews 5:9), that is how everything will turn out (Romans 8:28).

Notice the following:

24 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. (Ecclesiastes 2:24)

12 I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, 13 and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor — it is the gift of God. 14 I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-14)

The above is true, essentially because being productive in work is intended to make things better. And humans should enjoy being productive.

Furthermore, God’s plan takes into account what has happened to you. Notice Old Testament teachings related to that:

11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations. 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance. 13 The

LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. 14 From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth; 15 He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works. (Psalm 33:11-15)

1 For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. (Ecclesiastes 9:1a)

9 A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. (Proverbs 16:9)

24 A man’s steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way? (Proverbs 20:24)

73 Your hands have made me and fashioned me; (Psalm 119:73)

17 ... “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, For there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” (Ecclesiastes 3:17)

Notice, now, passages in the New Testament:

11 But the one and the same Spirit is operating in all these things, dividing separately to each one as God Himself desires. ... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and you are all individual members. (1 Corinthians 12:11, 27, AFV)

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Galatians 6:7-8)

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name ... (Hebrews 6:10)

God has a plan for ALL! That includes YOU INDIVIDUALLY whether you are called in this age or not. And He considers ALL OF YOUR WORKS.

All that you have been through, all that you have suffered, all of which you accomplished, etc. is preparing YOU to make eternity better (unless you will ultimately refuse to support God’s Kingdom). Everything you have been through has been preparing

you for the calling and work God has for you! YOU will be able to give in a unique way and help make eternity better!

The Bible mentions that just like the body has parts like hands and eyes and parts for smelling, hearing, and other things (1 Corinthians 12:12-26), we all have our unique part in the eternal plan God has. Yes, your role could be quite different from the other billions of humans — don't think God does not have a real plan for YOU.

Furthermore, you are accountable for what you do (Romans 14:12). God will judge based on what you do (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Revelation 20:12) as well as what you fail to do (Matthew 25:24-30). The more you do what you should do, the more you will make eternity better for your own self and others. The more you do not do what you should not do, you will make eternity better for your own self and others. God is a righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:8).

The Bible teaches that we shall be rewarded according to our works (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; Proverbs 24:12; Jeremiah 17:10; Revelation 22:12)! And we will be able to help more people because of that (cf. Luke 19:15-19). The Bible says that after death, our works follow us (cf. Revelation 14:13) — which basically means that what we learned and developed while physical will shape how we will be able to give and work throughout eternity.

Everything God has done He has had a reason for (Ezekiel 14:23). Including the length of our lives, which is usually a mystery for us (cf. Ecclesiastes 9:12).

“Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22) as He has fantastic reasons for everything He does — even when it does not always seem that way to us (cf. Hebrews 12:11; Romans 8:28).

Many have erroneously judged God based on their own conclusions, yet the Bible also teaches:

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Some things have been hidden. We also do not know everything about any human.

All people are not the same. God has an individual plan for each of us (1 Corinthians 12:4-12).

God is working with all so that each of us can have our part in eternity! As scripture teaches:

17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. (Isaiah 32:17)

11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)

Peace and pleasures forevermore. A better eternity!

What is something YOU SHOULD DO?

11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. 12 Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. (Psalm 34:11-14)

3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:3-4)

DO GOOD! TRUST GOD.

What does all this mean?

It means that God created what He did so His creation could do good.

Or more specifically, God created everything He did so that eternity would be better! Isn't that great?

3 ... Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! (Revelation 15:3)

19 Oh, how great is Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men! (Psalm 31:19)

God's goodness is great because of what He has prepared for us to come.

In Hebrews 11:4-12, starting with Abel, we learn about various ones called of God in the Old Testament.

And referring to them, notice what the verses that follow teach:

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

So at least since the time of Abel, people have had faith that God had a plan for something better, and that God is the God of those who truly understood that. The “city” is New Jerusalem which will come down to the earth from heaven (Revelation 21:2).

The plan is for things to get better.

Consider the following from the New Testament:

17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:17)

Doesn't that mean Christians are to do good?

Doing good is making things better.

Early Church Writers on Doing Good and Deification

Early church writers had some understanding and gave clues about the purpose of the mystery of God's plan.

In the 2nd century (A.D.) Polycarp of Smyrna, who was ordained by one or more of the original apostles, wrote:

Let us be zealous in the pursuit of that which is good (Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians, Chapter 6)

He {Jesus} teaches ... for the fruit of the eternal reward. (Polycarp, Fragments from Victor of Capua, section 4)

Similarly, Melito of Sardis, who was a later successor to Polycarp, wrote:

He has given thee a mind endowed with freedom; He has set before thee objects in great number, that thou on thy part mayest distinguish the nature of each thing and choose for thyself that which is good; (Melito. A Discourse Which Was in the Presence of Antoninus Caesar. In Ante-Nicene Fathers by Roberts and Donaldson, Volume 8, 1885. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), printing 1999, p. 755)

Learning to do good builds character. When we choose to do what is good we help to make things better.

Melito understood that God gave humans freedom of choice and we are to choose what is good. Despite Adam and Eve choosing to transgress, which in essence brought slavery (cf. Romans 6:16-17), Melito explained:

But man, who is by nature capable of receiving good and evil as soil of the earth is capable of receiving seeds from both sides, welcomed the hostile and greedy counselor, and by having touched that tree transgressed the command, and disobeyed God. (Melito. The Homily On the Passover by Melito, line 48)

Melito also understood that Jesus was part of the plan to deliver us from the slavery of sin:

The mystery of the passover is new and old, eternal and temporal, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal ... Well, the truth of the matter is the mystery of the Lord is both old and new ... For it was through the voice of prophecy that the mystery of the Lord was proclaimed. ... This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom, and who made us a new priesthood, and a special people forever. (Melito. The Homily On the Passover by Melito, lines 2,58,61,68)

Yes, the kingdom is forever, for eternity. And it was through the mystery of prophecy — prophecies that were not understood as well as they should have been by religious leaders of Jesus' time — Jesus

was proclaimed before He came (for hundreds of those prophecies, check out the free book, online at ccog.org titled: Proof Jesus is the Messiah). Another mystery associated with the Passover is that Jesus broke bread and gave each of the disciples a unique piece (cf. Luke 24:30), which, for those who properly keep the Christian Passover (which is sometimes called the Eucharist) today, helps show that God has something unique for each of us and we all are special people.

Irenaeus of Lyon claimed to have been taught by Polycarp of Smyrna. Irenaeus wrote that Christians have “the hope of the resurrection to eternity” (Irenaeus. Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter 18, para 5). And yes, resurrected Christians will live throughout eternity.

The Psalms teach:

20 You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21 You shall increase my greatness, And comfort me on every side. (Psalm 71:20-21)

After the resurrection (also referred to as reviving again) God will increase the greatness of His servants.

How much so?

Jesus cited the “you are Gods” (John 10:34) portion of Psalm 82:6 which is a teaching related to ultimate deification to those who will be willing to live God’s way.

Irenaeus also taught that:

... there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, and those who possess the adoption (Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book IV, Preface, Verse 4)

“I said, You are all the sons of the Highest, and gods; but you shall die like men.” He speaks undoubtedly these words to those who have not received the gift of adoption, but who despise the incarnation of the pure generation of the Word of God, defraud human nature of promotion into God, and prove themselves ungrateful to the Word of God, who became flesh for them. For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was

the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God. For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. (Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book III, Chapter 19, Verse 1)

The Apostle John wrote:

2 Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2, Darby Bible Translation)

Because Jesus has not yet returned, Christians have not yet changed to be like Him — but being so changed is part of the plan (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-53). There is still some mystery as far as how we will look (1 Corinthians 13:12), but God’s plan involves deification (Romans 8:29; Acts 17:29; Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 3:14-19; Malachi 2:15).

In the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote:

For it is not my desire to act towards you as a man-pleaser, but as pleasing God, even as also you please Him. For neither shall I ever have such [another] opportunity of attaining to God ... entitled to the honour of a better work ... It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again to Him. ... Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God ... I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life. (Ignatius. Letter to the Romans, Chapters 2,4)

He is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Church. All these have for their object the attaining to the unity of God (Ignatius. Letter to the Romans, Chapter 9)

So, Ignatius taught that the goal for God’s people was deification and to do a better, eternal, work.

Later in the 2nd century, Theophilus of Antioch wrote:

To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek immortality, He will give life everlasting, joy, peace, rest, and abundance of good things, which neither has eye seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book I, Chapter 14)

Wherefore also, when man had been formed in this world, it is mystically written in Genesis, as if he had been twice placed in Paradise; so that the one was fulfilled when he was placed there, and the second will be fulfilled after the resurrection and judgment. For just as a vessel, when on being fashioned it has some flaw, is remoulded or remade, that it may become new and entire; so also it happens to man by death. For somehow or other he is broken up, that he may rise in the resurrection whole; I mean spotless, and righteous, and immortal. ... For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God ... so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God ... For God has given us a law and holy commandments; and every one who keeps these can be saved, and, obtaining the resurrection, can inherit incorruption. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapters 26, 27, p. 105)

he who acts righteously shall escape the eternal punishments, and be thought worthy of the eternal life from God. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book II, Chapter 34)

But those who worship the eternal God, They shall inherit everlasting life. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book II, Chapter 36)

And we have learned a holy law; but we have as lawgiver Him who is really God, who teaches us to act righteously, and to be pious, and to do good. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book III, Chapter 9)

So, Theophilus taught deification and doing good for those who were real Christians.

In the 3rd century, the Catholic saint and Bishop

Hippolytus of Rome wrote:

The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and He, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the breath (spirit) of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the layer he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead. (Hippolytus. The Discourse on the Holy Theophany, Chapter 8)

For, by progressing in virtue, and attaining to better things, "reaching forth to those things which are before," {Philippians 3:13, KJV} according to the word of the blessed Paul, we rise ever to the higher beauty. I mean, however, of course, spiritual beauty, so that to us too it may be said hereafter, "The King greatly desired your beauty." (Hippolytus. Fragments from the Scriptural Commentaries of Hippolytus)

Thus, Hippolytus taught deification and that Christians, by progressing in virtue, attain better things. In the 4th century, the Greco-Roman saint and Bishop Ambrose of Milan taught:

Then a Virgin conceived, and the Word became flesh that flesh might become God (Ambrose of Milan. Concerning Virginity (Book I, Chapter 11).

In the 4th century, the Greco-Orthodox saint and Bishop John Chrysostom wrote:

... the man can become God, and a child of God. For we read, "I have said, You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High." (John Chrysostom. Homily 32 on the Acts of the Apostles)

Deification was understood to be a goal for humans since at least the time of Jesus.

Work to Do Good

Solomon wrote that people are to consider the work of God (Ecclesiastes 7:13). Many people do not understand the work of God or consider it well enough

— but they should (cf. Matthew 6:33). There is a work to be done now to support (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20; Romans 9:28; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; Revelation 3:7-10). And that is good to do (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6-14; Revelation 3:7-13).

Over two dozen times (NKJV) the Bible specifically says to “do good.” We do good by working to help others. We do good by loving God and our neighbors (Matthew 22:37-39) — other humans.

Christians are to support the work of God to reach others (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20; Romans 10:15, 15:26-27).

The purpose of work is to make things better:

5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,
(Proverbs 21:5a)

23 In all labor there is profit, (Proverbs 14:23)

23 In all labour there is advantage, (Proverbs
14:23, Young’s Literal Translation)

Working should provide a benefit (advantage) to all.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

We are to work for God’s good pleasure — which is to increase love and make eternity better. God has a job for each of us:

15 You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands. (Job 14:15)

YOU, too, are the work of God’s hands! He has a plan for you and it involves you doing a work to help make eternity better.

Writer Maria Popova made the following observation:

The mystery of what makes you and your childhood self the same person despite a lifetime of changes is, after all, one of the most interesting questions of philosophy. (Popova M. Grace Paley on the Art of Growing Older. Brain Pickings, September 3, 2015)

While that is a mystery to many, it is not a mystery to God. God is working with all of us to help us be the best that we can be. As well as to assist others.

Consider that the reason to invent things is usually to make things better.

The reason God “invented” humans was to make eternity better.

Paul and Barnabas stated:

18 Known to God from eternity are all His works.
(Acts 15:18)

God created people and placed them on this earth as part of His plan for good work:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

All humans?

All who accept God’s plan will make eternity better. And that will be all who ever lived except the incorrigibly wicked (for more details on that, check our free online book at ccog.org: Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God’s plan of salvation).

Jesus declared that there was a place for each of us:

1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well. 2 In My Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into My presence, so that you also may be where I am. (John 14:1-3, BSB)

A place for YOU means that Jesus is promising a place that will be best for you. For your abilities. Do not worry that you cannot be a happy and contributing member of the Kingdom of God. God is faithful to finish the work He has begun in you (cf. Philippians 1:6).

God's plan for human beings shall last forever:

14 I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

The Bible shows that Jesus, Himself, came to make things better:

6 ... He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6)

Christians have a hope for the better — and this should be comforting:

19 ... there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:19)

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

34 ... knowing yourselves to have a better and abiding possession. (Hebrews 10:34, Berean Literal Bible)

God created all that He did so that eternity would be better. It will be better forever (cf. Jeremiah 32:38-41).

Making things better for us pleases God, which is also better. And yes, God can be pleased (cf. Hebrews 11:5, 13:16; 1 Peter 2:19-20, NLT) — is that not better for God as well?

God created what He did so eternity would be better. That is why He created the universe and that is why

He created men and women.

God's plan includes all who will heed His call in this age (see also: Is God Calling You?) and others in the age to come (see also the free online book: Universal OFFER of Salvation. Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation).

Christians need to understand that their individual part is to make eternity better.

But this MUST be done God's way.

12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

There are people who think they are making the world better in many ways. And as long as it aligns with God's ways, hopefully they are.

Yet, there are people who think they are making the world better when they protest in favor of abortion rights and various forms of immorality denounced by the Bible.

There are people who think they are making the world better when they promote pagan practices as good.

Sadly, most people persuade themselves and trust in the view of others, older traditions, their desires, and/or their heart over the Bible. Yet, scripture warns:

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the Lord,

search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

Do you have a heart willing to do things God's way?

Really? Truly?

Hopefully you do.

While God wants people to do good, those with deceitful hearts are not doing so:

20 He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil. (Proverbs 17:20)

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS - PART 2: A LEPER HEALED



Jesus had just finished teaching people all about the Kingdom of God, many people were still following him afterwards.

There in front of him stood a man with a skin disease. He was all covered in scabs and sores. He came up to Jesus and lay on the ground before him. Kneeling and bowing as he would to a king.

The man knew that Jesus could heal him. So he asked, "If you want to make me well again, and make my skin clean, I know you can."

Jesus reached out and touched the man, and answered him, "I do want to make you clean again." And He did!

That very moment the man's skin became smooth!

Jesus told him to go straight away to the priest and to take a gift for God with him. This was so the priest could look at his clean skin and say, "This man no longer has a skin disease, he can now meet together with other people."

He would not need to hide away from people any more. He was so thankful for all that Jesus had done for him.

WORD HUNT – Cross out every x, y and z to find words from the story

x	s	i	z	c	Y	x	k	y
d	i	x	s	z	E	a	s	e
z	b	o	z	w	X	i	n	g
x	y	k	i	x	Z	n	z	g
c	y	l	z	e	A	x	n	z
t	o	y	u	c	Z	h	e	d
y	p	x	r	i	E	z	s	t

1 When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. 2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 3 Jesus

Continued on next page 30

Even when things look difficult from a physical perspective, trust God:

9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. (Psalm 34:9-10)

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:31-34)

To maximize your potential for yourself and others, trust God and have Him as your decision-making advisor:

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. (Proverbs 3:5-8)

Do not be so wise in your own eyes that you will not fully trust in God.

You will be better off trusting in God.

Work and support God's work to reach others.

Yes, God has a plan for YOU!

Brief Answer to a Scriptural Question



Q. What is the church's position on interracial dating and marriage?

A. Marriage is a serious, lifelong, decision that should not be entered into lightly. Racial and cultural differences can add great strain to it.

The Bible shows that God had peoples and races separated after the flood. Yet, various peoples mixed (like the Polynesians and Mexicans, for two examples) and various ones made individual decisions about this that crossed ethnic (like Joseph; see Genesis 41:45)

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reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Matthew 8:1-4)

Further Learning

This miracle is told in very few verses, but there is more to it than a simple healing.

Notice that this man is not with the crowds who were up the mountain, yet he knows the power that Jesus has. He is not with those crowds because of the skin disease. People were shunned because of fear of catching the disease. Leprosy was a very nasty illness, but the use of the word leprosy, could have meant any of a number of skin ailments.

According to the Law of God, a person with such a skin disease could not enter the temple. Having this condition would prevent the man from working, from worshipping God in the temple, and from being around other people.

2020 was a year where the whole world felt the effects of Covid-19 — and we still see the affects in 2021. Countries in lockdown; fear of contagion. This is what it had been like for this man. Perhaps for years, he could not mingle with other people. How lonely a life would that be?

Jesus wants to heal this man. He says so, and this word "ethelō" (Strong's G2309) means to "really desire to",

not just "yeah, I suppose I could". And more than that, Jesus reaches out and touches him. This action speaks even louder than the words. This man has probably not had human contact in a long time, and here was this great teacher touching him. This action would make Jesus ceremonially unclean for seven days; just by touching the man! But touch him, He did. The man became clean. He hadn't just been sick, but he was unclean, he was defiled, dirty and an outcast. He was not just healed, but he was cleansed.

Jesus tells him to go to present himself to the priest. He is showing that the Law of Moses, The Torah, given by God, is a good and right Law and it was still to be obeyed.

He would take his offering of two birds to the priest who would then use the blood from the offering of one of the birds to sprinkle over the other, which would then be set free. The shed blood being a symbol that the man is now cleansed of his disease (Leviticus 14:1-10).

A few years later, the blood of Jesus would be shed for the cleansing of this man's sin, and the cleansing of the sin of all humankind.

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

You too can call on the Living God through His son, our Saviour, Jesus to cleanse you from your sin and become part of His family.

and racial (like Moses; see Numbers 12:1) lines in their marriages.

People with major cultural differences often have major difficulties in marriages. The way husbands and wives interact and work in a marriage can differ greatly for cultural/traditional reasons.

Years ago, for example, when it was not 'politically incorrect' to do this, US government officials would recommend that American women not marry Greek men. Essentially, the warning was that while Greek men were charming when courting women and nice looking, the way they treated their women after they married them and what they expected from them was so different than in the USA, that American women were often very sorry that they married them.

While this example was not intended as a warning about Greek men, it was simply presented here to warn people that there may be major issues with cultural differences and it is better to try to understand them before making a major mistake.

Furthermore, some cultures treat in-laws and others differently. This include how close or how distant they will be with the married couple. Sometimes this can be good, but sometimes it can be stressful and frustrating.

Economic differences can also be a factor. Even in the same general culture, some families have more wealth than others — hence different spending habits.

Even among those with similar economic situations, how money is handled varies from family to family as well as from person to person. When dating, pay attention to your date's attitude towards money. He or she might handle it well or might spend so recklessly that you will always have money problems.

Consider the following:

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for

which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Often one spouse will not be content, while the other will be. This does not mean that the couple should be lazy and not try to earn more if possible, but lack of contentment can cause nagging and arguments. It is not usually a lack of finances that causes divorce in Western cultures, but the lack of compatibility in the financial arena. This is something to try to check out while you are dating. Financial factors are leading causes of divorce in Western nations.

Despite the assertions of some, the Bible has no specific injunctions against Christians marrying across ethnic/racial lines. However, because of problems with the world (cf. Numbers 12:1-2) as well as difficulties in marriage, we recommend that people try to marry someone that they are most compatible with, while also considering how their future children might realistically be affected (this tends to vary by country/culture).

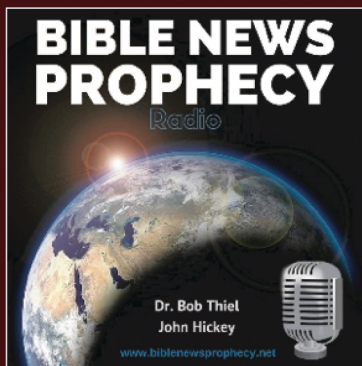
According to the 2010 Census in the United States, interracial divorce rates are comparatively higher than divorce rates between white couples. Kenya-based CCOG evangelist Evans Ochieng has reported that, for example, when native Africans and Westerners marry, this has tended to cause many problems. So, race is something to consider.

While we in the Continuing Church of God do not encourage miscegenation (marrying across racial lines), we do not see that we have the biblical authority to prohibit it, therefore we do not prohibit it.

Now, there is a serious issue racially-different Christian couples MUST consider. In many parts of the world, children of racially-mixed marriages are treated terribly. Even when they are older.

Christians are to love their neighbors as themselves (Matthew 22:39). Therefore, they should give SERIOUS consideration to how anyone they marry will affect their children physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

More on dating and marriage can be found in our free booklet, available online at ccog.org, titled Dating: A Key to Success in Marriage, a practical dating guide for Christians.



Fulfilling Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20



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CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the CCOG Spanish language website.

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The *Continuing Church of God* also uses books, personal visits, daily electronic newsletters, and weekly letters to the brethren to support Matthew 24:14, Romans 11:25, and Matthew 28:19-20.