

October – December 2021

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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

PROVERBS Answering? Not Answering!

Proverbs

Prologue: Purpose and Theme
The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
that will bring to light and life and
favor and grace and peace to those
who love and obey them;
and that the words of the Lord may be
glorified.

The Holy Spirit

How can the Holy Spirit help you?

Repackaged Demonic Holidays?

Should you keep days in the Fall and Winter that early Christians would not?

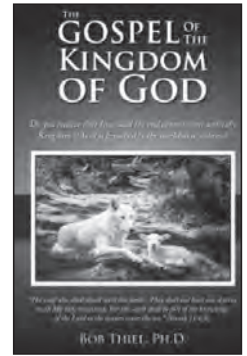
BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



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Back Cover: Internet and Radio This shows where written as well as audio-visual messages from the *Continuing Church of God* can be found.

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Repackaged Demonic Holidays?

In the Fall and Winter we see the world observe many days.

Many would be surprised to learn that Greco-Roman theologians have sometimes condemned these holidays as pagan and inappropriate for Christians—despite the fact that various Greco-Roman churches promote them in the 21st century.

Halloween/All Saints' Day

While the idea of honoring the memory of the life and death of a person like a saint is not opposed to scripture (cf. Judges 11:38-40), veneration of saints and sacrificing to them is opposed to apostolic teachings.

Satan wanted Christ to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:9), but Jesus refused (Matthew 4:10). Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-23) reportedly encouraged his followers to venerate/worship him (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book 1, Chapter 23, Verses 1-5).

The Apostle Peter not only denounced Simon Magus, he forbade a Gentile from bowing down or paying homage to him (Acts 10:25-26). The Apostle Paul forbade Gentiles from sacrificing to him and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-18). The Apostles basically both argued that they were men and this should not be done. Early Christians understood this and did not do such. Over time, however, some heretics began to venerate relics in the late second century.

The veneration of claimed saints began to be a significant problem with the Greco-Roman churches in the fourth and later centuries, despite the fact it was not an apostolic practice.

Notice the following:

By incorporating familiar Pagan images, such as Celtic gods, the Green Man, and bicephalic heads within churches and cathedrals, church officials encouraged the populace to intermingle the two spiritual traditions in their mind supposedly easing their acceptance of the new religion and

smoothing the transition from the old ways to the new. (Pesznecker S. *Gargoyles: From the Archives of the Grey School of Wizardry*. Career Press, 2006, p. 85)

In a book, the above statement preceded a truncated version of the following that Pope "Gregory "the Great" wrote around 600 A.D.:

Tell Augustine that he should be no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the saints in them. For, if those temples are well built, they should be converted **from the worship of demons** to the service of the true God. ... Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. **They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God** to whom, as the giver of all things, they will give thanks for having been satiated. (Gregory I: Letter to Abbot Mellitus. *Epsitola* 76, PL 77: 1215-1216)

Pope Gregory advocated the incorporation on pagan practices. Yet, the Bible opposes this and these type of sacrifices as demonic (1 Corinthians 10:20-21). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that after the sacrifice of Jesus that there is no need for animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1-10). Allowing the above for 'saints days' shows that this is also relic of paganism and that they are truly demonic holidays.

Many dress biblically inappropriately (cf. 1 Timothy 2:9) and sometimes also as witches (which the Bible condemns— Exodus 22:8) on Halloween. This is not a biblically-appropriate celebration and certainly was not an early Christian one.

All Saints' Day was declared in the seventh century, and later moved to November 1st and the evening

before became known as Halloween (Mershman F. All Saints' Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. Nihil Obstat. March 1, 1907).

October 31 was a date the ancient Druids observed:

The Druids, and order of priests in ancient Gaul and Britain, believed that on Halloween, ghosts, spirits, fairies, witches, and elves came out to harm people. ... From these Druid beliefs come the present-day use of witches, ghosts, and cats in Halloween festivities...The custom of using leaves, pumpkins, and corn stalks as Halloween decorations comes from the Druids. The early peoples of Europe also had a festival similar to the Druid holiday...In the 700s, the Roman Catholic Church named November 1 as All Saints' Day. **The old pagan customs and the Christian feast day were combined into the Halloween festival.** (Halloween. World Book Encyclopedia, vol 9. Chicago, 1966: 25-26)

It may be of interest to consider what a Roman Catholic writer wrote:

Why would a pope put the Catholic celebration of the dead on top of the pagans' celebrations of the dead? Because the Catholic feasts are in continuity and fulfill the meaning of the pagan ones. (Killian Brian. Halloween, as autumn celebration, reminder God's name is hallowed. Catholic Online International News. 10/31/06)

It is a fact that many associated with the Church of Rome relish and boast about pagan connections for their faith. It is the Bible that they, and all, should look to as the source of doctrine (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16) and it condemns using pagan forms of worship (Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Jeremiah 10:2-6; 1 Corinthians 10:21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Christmas

The Bible never endorses the celebration of birthdays, including that of Jesus. The early Church of Rome did not celebrate Christmas nor any other birthday. Furthermore, Tertullian warned that to participate in the winter celebrations with wreaths and gift-giving made one behold to pagan gods. There was one such celebration known as the Saturnalia that was celebrated by the heathen in late December.

The claimed "father of Latin theology," Tertullian denounced winter celebrations, such as Saturnalia (from a pagan deity whose name meant plentiful) which morphed into Christmas as he wrote:

The Minervalia are as much Minerva's, as the Saturnalia Saturn's; Saturn's, which must necessarily be celebrated even by little slaves at the time of the Saturnalia. New-year's gifts likewise must be caught at, and the Septimontium kept; and all the presents of Midwinter and the feast of Dear Kinsmanship must be exacted; the schools must be wreathed with flowers; the flamens' wives and the aediles sacrifice; the school is honoured on the appointed holy-days. The same thing takes place on an idol's birthday; every pomp of the devil is frequented. Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master? (Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter X)

Around the time of Tertullian, the Roman Bishops Zephyrinus (199-217) and Callistus (217-222) had a reputation of compromise and corruption (and this is confirmed by such Roman Catholic saints such as Hippolytus (Hippolytus. Refutation of All Heresies, Book IX, Chapter VI) and allowed people in their church that compromised with paganism, etc.

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an even earlier pagan religion – that of the ancient Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Bible condemns worship involving evergreen trees (Deuteronomy 12:2-3; Jeremiah 3:13; 10:2-6).

The Babylonians also celebrated a rebirth of the sun during the season of the winter solstice. December 25th was eventually chosen as the date of Jesus' birthday, because the Saturnalia and other sun god worship happened at that time of the year:

In 354 A.D., Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. (Sechrist EH. Christmas. World Book Encyclopedia, Volume

3. Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago, 1966, pp. 408-417)

Helios Mithras is one god...Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. **The 25 December was observed as his birthday, the natalis invicti, the rebirth of the winter-sun, unconquered by the rigours of the season.** (Arendzen J. Mithraism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. Nihil Obstat, October 1, 1911)

Emperor Constantine had been the follower of the sun-god Mithras, who was considered to be the unconquered sun and was one born from a rock in a below ground cave. Perhaps because of this, his mother Helena decide to believe the myth that Jesus was born in a below ground rocky cave.

Rome now teaches this (and this author has seen that 'nativity' displayed multiple times in Vatican City), but in the third century one of its supporters, Commodianus, condemned the rock deity:

The unconquered one was born from a rock, if he is regarded as a god. Now tell us, then, on the other hand, which is the first of these two. The rock has overcome the god: then the creator of the rock has to be sought after. Moreover, you still depict him also as a thief; although, if he were a god, he certainly did not live by theft. Assuredly he was of earth, and of a monstrous nature. And he turned other people's oxen into his caves; just as did Cacus, that son of Vulcan. (Commodianus. On Christian Discipline)

Jesus was not born from a rock, yet that is partially how His birth is now portrayed. It is also not true to teach that He was born on December 25th. Scholars recognize that shepherds would not have been out with their flocks in the field (like the Bible shows in Luke 2:8) as late as December 25th and that the biblically-mentioned (Luke 2:1-5) "census would have been impossible in winter" (Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908).

Many of the practices and customs associated with Christmas come from paganism as real scholars will admit. Neither Jesus' apostles nor their early followers observed Christmas.

New Year's Day Honored Janus (god of time) and Strenua (goddess of purification and well being)

The Bible begins the year in the Spring (Exodus 12:2), but what is commonly called New Year's Day is observed on January 1st on modern calendars. In the late 2nd century A.D., Greco-Roman theologian Tertullian condemned those who professed Christ who were celebrating a version of it. But, that did not stop many who wanted to celebrate.

The Catholic Encyclopedia reports:

Christian writers and councils condemned the heathen orgies and excesses connected with the festival ... celebrated at the beginning of the year: Tertullian blames Christians who regarded the customary presents — called *strenae* (Fr. *étrennes*) from the goddess *Strenia*, who presided over New Year's Day (cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 185-90) — as mere tokens of friendly intercourse (*De Idol.* xiv). (Tierney J. New Year's Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11, 1911)

Around 487 A.D., the Greco-Romans seemed to adopt the "Feast of the Circumcision" on January 1st. This, however, did not stop all heathen activity.

The Catholic Encyclopedia notes:

Even in our own day the secular features of the opening of the New Year interfere with the religious observance of the Circumcision, and tend to make a mere holiday of that which should have the sacred character of a Holy Day. St. Augustine points out the difference between the pagan and the Christian manner of celebrating the day: pagan feasting and excesses were to be expiated by Christian fasting and prayer (P. L., XXXVIII, 1024 sqq.; *Serm.* cxcvii, cxcviii). (*Ibid*)

So it also states:

...towards the end of the sixth century the Council of Auxerre (can. 1) forbade Christians *strenas diabolicas observare*.

The expression *strenas diabolicas observare* roughly translates from Latin to English as "observing the new time of the Devil." It is likely that New Year's

resolutions are related to prayers and practices once given for the pagan goddess.

January 1st is not a biblical holiday, and even the Church of Rome has forbidden some of its attributes as demonic.

Valentine's Day Honored Faunus/ Pan (god of herds and fertility)

The Bible does not have a holiday like Valentine's Day, but many people observe it.

Here is what a Roman Catholic source has written about it:

The roots of St. Valentine's Day lie in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was celebrated on Feb. 15. For 800 years the Romans had dedicated this day to the god Lupercus. On Lupercalia, a young man would draw the name of a young woman in a lottery and would then keep the woman as a sexual companion for the year...

The Catholic Church no longer officially honors St. Valentine, but the holiday has both Roman and Catholic roots. (The Origins of St. Valentine's Day. <http://www.american catholic.org>)

A day of pagan roots and sexual license is certainly not a day for Christians to observe. This type of behavior was warned against in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 6:18; Jude 4).

Notice some Islamic comments about Valentine's Day:

Celebrating the Valentine Day is not permissible because: Firstly, it is an innovated holiday ...Christians were aware of the Pagan roots of Valentine's Day. **The way the Christians adopted St. Valentine's Day should be a lesson** for Muslims ...We should avoid anything associated with pagan immoral practices .. Love between families, friends and married people does not need to be celebrated on a day with such origins. (Ruling on Celebrating Valentine's Day. <http://www. contactpakistan.com>)

Notice that Muslims associate Valentine's Day with Christianity (obviously the false compromising kind) and sin.

In other words, Valentine's Day causes the name of Christ (through the term 'Christianity') to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24; Isaiah 52:5). Do not have "the name of God blasphemed because of you" (Romans 2:24) keeping pagan holidays.

Repackaged Pagan Holidays

While the Bible does not prohibit secular holidays (like sober independence day observances), early Christians did NOT pray to dead saints nor observe anything like All Saint's Day nor Christmas. Many pagan deities were essentially changed from being the 'god of something' to being called the 'saint of something.'

Some of the pagan practices may have changed, but the repackaged demonic holidays are still not Christian, nor are they those that Jesus and His early followers kept. Many holidays that people keep came from paganism, and even have ties to the ancient Babylonian mystery religion. When God sent Nehemiah to help the children of Israel who had been influenced by Babylon, notice what Nehemiah said he did:

30 I cleansed them of everything pagan.
(Nehemiah 13:30)

The New Testament warns of a compromised faith and "Mystery Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5).

Notice what the Bible teaches that God's people should do in regards to "Babylon the Great":

4 Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.
(Revelation 18:4)

Christians should flee temptation and sin (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22), not embrace it nor promote it. They should not combine pagan practices in with the worship of the true God (1 Corinthians 10:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18), even it is a tradition (Matthew 15:3-9).

Real Christians do not keep repackaged demonic holidays (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:21).

More on this can be found in our free online booklet: *Should you observe God's Holy Days or demonic holidays?*

Thanksgiving: Can Christians Keep It?



The First Thanksgiving painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris (1863–1930)

In the USA, the fourth Thursday in November is a holiday called Thanksgiving. It is also observed in Canada on an earlier date:

According to Wikipedia:

In Canada, Thanksgiving is celebrated on the second Monday in October. It is the only other country outside of the United States that officially observes the day as a holiday.

Unlike most holidays observed in the USA and Canada, this Thanksgiving is not of pagan origin. Hence, the vast majority in the Church of God (COG) consider it an “optional” (not biblically-required) holiday. Jesus Himself seemed to observe a national Jewish, as opposed to a biblical, holiday called the Feast of the Dedication in the New Testament as He went to the Temple during it (John 10:22-23).

As Americans know, the history related to the USA Thanksgiving involves a group of people commonly known as the Pilgrims.

They were a dissenting religious group considered to be outside of mainstream “Christianity”. The Pilgrims felt that the only way freely to practice their religion

was to physically separate themselves from the Church of England that had persecuted them. First to flee persecution, these “Separatists,” moved to the English Midlands. Then they went to Amsterdam in 1607. In 1609, they moved to the more religiously tolerant Netherlands. But they decided that this would not do. Finally, they began their voyage to America in 1620. It took months to cross the sea and they lost many during that voyage as well as after coming to America. In spite of all their sufferings and the death of half of their company, in October 1621, the Pilgrims celebrated their first harvest. In 1863, US President Lincoln made a proclamation that ultimately led to Thanksgiving becoming a US holiday.

The persecutions of the Pilgrims somewhat remind me of the history of the Church of God.

Notice something from the old Radio Church of God on this subject:

Dear Friend:

How should we view the American custom or celebrating Thanksgiving Day?

The Thanksgiving holiday was established in

comparatively recent years. It is, or course, not mentioned in Scripture — but the principle of attending and celebrating national holidays is made clear in Scripture.

Thanksgiving Day was established by the early colonists, not by any Divine authority. But this in itself does not make it wrong to celebrate with good fellowship. Notice the example of Jesus Christ. In John 10:22 we find that Christ attended the “Feast of Dedication,” which was established by the Jews years before to commemorate the purification of the temple at Jerusalem. That day was celebrated on the anniversary of the day that the reestablishment of Divine worship occurred after Antiochus Epiphanes had been vanquished and the temple purified about 165 B.C.

Jesus’ attendance at that annual holiday clearly illustrated that it is not wrong to attend or celebrate a national holiday established for an honorable purpose. There was nothing wrong in the Jews’ celebrating the dedication of the temple and giving God special gratitude on that day. God led Esther and Mordecai to establish the Feast of Purim in commemoration of the miraculous deliverance of the Jews from bloody Haman (see the last chapter or Esther).

The national holidays celebrated by the Jews have, of course, no special significance for the non-Jew — just as Thanksgiving Day holds no special significance for our non-American brethren scattered around the world. God permits these customs only if they do not get out of hand. What God expressly forbids is the observance of pagan festivals which were intended as deliberate substitutes for the plan and program of God. We are not to adopt in God’s worship those customs which heathen used in serving their gods. But it is proper and fitting for national leaders to set aside time for the whole nation to give God special thanks for His unique bounty to this nation.

Thanksgiving Day was first celebrated by the Pilgrims in 1621 after their first harvest had been entirely reaped. On that day, they paid tribute to God for all their bountiful and undeserved material and spiritual blessings. Thanksgiving

Day gradually became neglected and was revived during the Civil War as a day of special national thanksgiving for preserving this nation. This American Thanksgiving Day does not have a pagan origin despite the claims of certain fringe sects. It is not usually celebrated with pagan ceremonial customs in honor of pagan traditions and gods, as are Christmas, Easter and Halloween. If this national holiday becomes corrupted, then it would be high time to reject it — but generally is not so celebrated today.

This day of national thanksgiving can be enjoyed by our brethren in America with an especially deep understanding because we know that our personal and national prosperity have come solely as the result of God’s promise to Abraham — and as a result of His choice of this nation as the springboard for His Church in this generation.

Our brethren in other nations do not celebrate this holiday any more than we celebrate the Jews’ Feasts of Dedication and Purim. What we all do celebrate are those divinely appointed Holy Days and Festivals established by God in His Word for all men. We never regard a national holiday with the same respect, awe and reverence as we do God’s Sabbath and His Holy Days. National holidays are just that — holidays, not Holy Days. They are a time of secular pleasure and gratitude, nothing more.

But in the midst of the Thanksgiving season, let’s not neglect Paul’s command in Ephesians 5:20 to “give thanks always.” Let’s not make a mockery of God’s special blessings to this nation.

LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT

Letter Number: 930

Publication Date: 1959

Thanksgiving is an optional national holiday. It is not a biblical holy day, nor is it kept like one.

But Christians should give thanks to God throughout the year, whether or not they observe some version of Thanksgiving.

One song of thanksgiving that comes to mind to me at

this time (and is in the old Worldwide Church of God hymnal as well as our songbook The Bible Hymnal) with the title Oh Give Thanks and Praise the Eternal!) is based 1 Chronicles 16:8-13 upon which says:

8 Oh, give thanks to the LORD!
Call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples!
9 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
10 Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!
11 Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!
12 Remember His marvelous works which He has done,
His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,
13 O seed of Israel His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!

Those of us who understand God's plan of salvation, should be thankful for being part of those chosen in this age. This is consistent with the following admonition from the Book of Psalms and one from the Apostle Paul:

4 Sing praise to the LORD, You saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. (Psalm 30:4)

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The Bible is full of admonitions to give thanks to God. in the NKJV the term "give thanks" is used 40 times and the term "giving thanks" is used 5 times—and nearly all of these verses are discussing giving thanks to God. The term "thanksgiving" is used 24 times. Here are a few of them:

14 Offer to God thanksgiving. (Psalms 50:14)

30 I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving. (Psalms 69:30)

2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the Lord is the great God, And the great King above all gods. (Psalms 95:2-3)

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations. (Psalms 100:4-5)

It is certainly appropriate to thank God for calling us, blessing us physically, and for the opportunity to understand the purpose of life and God's way of life, the sacrifice of Jesus, and for the opportunity for salvation that He has given to us. We can be grateful for the understanding of God's great plan that the Kingdom of God will bring peace and abundant prosperity.

Despite the fact that we and the peoples of the world will be punished for our sins, God does have a plan to bring peace and prosperity (see the free books, online at ccog.org, titled *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God and Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.*)

We do not 'add a day' to God's holy days if we somehow observe Thanksgiving or other national holidays. National observances are NOT holy days, nor does anyone have to keep them. Jesus, however, observed at least one, setting an example that we can if we so choose.

While Christians can observe national holidays, presuming they can do so without sinning, they do not have to keep holidays like Thanksgiving. While he was mainly referring to fast days, the following from the Apostle Paul seems to be applicable here:

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. (Romans 14:5-6)

If one has a problem of conscience keeping Thanksgiving, then one should not. But, either way, Christians should thank and praise God.

Give thanks and praise the Eternal!

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE



These spectacular lightning bolts are vivid manifestations of the POWER of God! Man stands in awe of the tremendous forces of nature. Yet few realize that the physical laws governing such phenomena were originally set in motion, and are kept operating, by the DYNAMIC Spirit of God. God sits at the controls of the entire universe – He rules and sustains His entire creation by the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT!

LESSON 20B: THE HOLY SPIRIT

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

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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.*

Spirit Rejected in Eden

1. Is “the mind of the FLESH” – the carnal mind with which you and I were born – capable of obeying God’s SPIRITUAL laws? Romans 8:7-8. What does this CARNALLY MOTIVATED mind produce? Verse 6. But what is the product of a SPIRIT-DIRECTED mind? Same verse.
2. Is God’s Spirit a SOUND and SENSIBLE, LOVING MIND? 2 Timothy 1:7.

COMMENT: A human mind UNITED WITH and guided BY the Holy Spirit of God leads to PEACE, POWER AND ETERNAL LIFE! But the CARNAL mind, WITHOUT God’s Spirit, is HOSTILE toward God and cannot think

clearly. Without it you are only “half there,” so to speak.

To put it plainly, WE ARE NOT FULLY SOUNDMINDED until we obtain GOD’S MIND! Until we receive it, we are totally motivated by our inherently EVIL, carnal minds (Jeremiah 17:9).

The SOUND MIND which comes through the indwelling of God’s Spirit means just what it implies. It is a truly BALANCED mind. The man possessing it is a BALANCED MAN – a WHOLE man – united with and guided by the Supreme Mind of the universe!

3. Was the Holy Spirit of God available to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? Genesis 2:9. But from what tree did they CHOOSE to eat? Genesis 2:17; 3:3, 6, 7. SIN seems pleasant – AT FIRST! Then Adam and Eve CHOSE NOT TO FOLLOW God’s way to salvation, and thereby REJECTED the Holy Spirit – didn’t they?
4. What was Adam and Eve’s GREAT PUNISHMENT for disobeying God? Genesis 3:16-19, 22-24.

COMMENT: If Adam and Eve had partaken of the tree in the Garden of Eden that represented God’s HOLY SPIRIT – the “tree of [eternal] life” – they would have received the SPIRITUAL mind of God, and ultimately eternal life, if they had CONTINUED to obey God. But Adam and Eve had to DESIRE the Spirit of God and SURRENDER themselves to God’s will in order to receive His Holy Spirit of ETERNAL life – exactly as all must do TODAY to receive it. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN BUT THIS ONE WAY TO SALVATION! But Adam and Eve CHOSE NOT to receive the Holy Spirit and eternal life GOD’S WAY!

Instead, they followed after the way that pleased their OWN CARNAL NATURE – the WAY that leads only to death (Genesis 2:17). And because of this SIN, God WITHHELD His Holy Spirit of love and eternal life from mankind (Genesis 3:24).

From the very minute mortal man DISOBEYED God, he was CUT OFF FROM ACCESS to the Spirit of God and the GIFT of eternal life! Ever since then, God has ALLOWED MAN TO GO HIS OWN WAY. God has set apart 6,000 years during which He has ALLOWED mankind to “BURN ITS FINGERS” – to learn that following the dictates of the CARNAL MIND leads only

to misery and death! And mankind, as a whole, HAS CONTINUED CHOOSING the way of disobedience to God (Romans 3:23). Without the Holy Spirit, suffering and death have resulted!

But in His great mercy and love for mankind, God promised to make His Holy Spirit available to man once again!

Spirit of Power Promised to Man!

1. Why was Israel of old UNABLE to keep even the LETTER of God’s law contained in the Old Covenant? Deuteronomy 5:29.

COMMENT: Israel was a physical, CARNAL church! (Acts 7:38.) They DID NOT HAVE THE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER – the “heart” – to be faithful in keeping their covenant vow because they DID NOT POSSESS God’s Holy Spirit! During that time, yes, the Holy Spirit was not available to the majority of them, but was given to a select few, Moses and the elders, Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25. Joshua, Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9, later on Gideon, Judges 3:10, King David, Psalm 51:11. From the time of Adam, God was letting man see the effects of living WITHOUT the Holy Spirit!

Therefore, the RIGHTEOUSNESS under the FIRST covenant HAD to be accomplished through human – FLESHLY – effort. But their disobedience demonstrated that they couldn’t obey God’s laws by HUMAN power ALONE!

Now “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV), but the law is love. Love is the fulfilling of the law, But YOU WEREN’T BORN WITH THE KIND OF LOVE THAT CAN FULFILL THE LAW OF GOD! All human love is carnal. There is another kind of love that’s on a higher level, a higher plane all together; and that is “the love of God ... shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” — Romans 5 and verse 5. And that is the only kind of love that can give you God’s righteousness.

2. HOW did God say He would make it POSSIBLE for men to OBEY His laws? Ezekiel 36:26-27.
3. Will the HOLY SPIRIT ultimately be made available to EVERYONE who CHOOSES to receive it? Joel 2:28-29.

4. Remember that the Holy Spirit is compared to LIVING WATERS (John 7:38). Who, then, is the FOUNTAIN SOURCE of the Holy Spirit of life and power? Jeremiah 17:13 and John 4:10, 14.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ is the MEDIATOR of a “better covenant” which contains “better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). Among these precious promises is the GIFT of the Holy Spirit which is compared to FLOWING WATER.

5. Did God promise that the time would come to give His Spirit of power to those who SINCERELY DESIRE – “THIRST” – for it? Isaiah 44:3 and John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: The Scriptures plainly show that the Holy Spirit CAN be placed WITHIN humans! For “out of his” – MAN’S – “HEART [his innermost being] WILL FLOW RIVERS of living water.”

6. WHEN was the Holy Spirit to be made available to humankind? John 7:39 and 16:7, KJV. Doesn’t this prove that the Holy Spirit (the “comforter” KJV, the “helper” NKJV) was not generally available to mankind BEFORE Christ’s death and ascension to heaven?
7. Did Jesus specifically promise that the Holy Spirit would dwell in his disciples – His followers? John 14:16-17.

COMMENT: When God created man of the dust of the ground, He did not place an obedient nature within him. And when God offered Adam the OPPORTUNITY of receiving the Holy Spirit and eternal life as a GIFT, his REBELLIOUS NATURE went contrary to God and CHOSE the way that has brought much suffering and death!

But God, in His great mercy, FORETOLD of a time when He would ONCE AGAIN – after humanity had experienced the TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES of living without the Holy Spirit – offer His Spirit to humankind so all could obey the spiritual law, and reap the physical and SPIRITUAL blessings the world really desires. The NEW Covenant promises all this!

Christ Received Great Power!

1. Did Christ – the “Word” – become HUMAN FLESH AND BLOOD, with human NATURE? Hebrews

2:9, 14; John 1:14 and Hebrews 4:14, 15. Was He MIRACULOUSLY BEGOTTEN PHYSICALLY by the Holy Spirit of power? Matthew 1:18-20.

COMMENT: Jesus miraculously became a HUMAN BEING. In His flesh was the SAME HUMAN CARNAL NATURE that you and I have. But Christ would have had NO supernatural power except for ONE thing. He was also begotten SPIRITUALLY by the Holy Spirit. By THIS begetting He derived His SPIRITUAL POWER.

Jesus’ miraculous PHYSICAL begetting is a TYPE illustrating our SPIRITUAL begetting by which the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit will CHANGE and strengthen us the way it did Christ!

2. Did God the Father completely fill Jesus with His Spirit of power? John 3:34, KJV or NLT and Colossians 1:19, NET. What did Christ do with this tremendous power? Acts 10:38.
3. What are a few of the many breath-taking, DIVINE MIRACLES Jesus performed by the POWER of God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within Him? Read them for yourself NOW!

What did Christ DO to water? John 2:1-11. How did Jesus, through the divine power of God, deal with a DEMON-POSSESSED man? Mark 1:23-28. Was Jesus able to CLEANSE – COMPLETELY HEAL – a leper? Mark 1:40-42.

4. What did Christ do to the waves of a roaring sea? Matthew 8:23-27. In what way did Christ show mercy to two blind men? Matthew 9:27-31. What MIRACLE did the POWER of the Holy Spirit perform through Jesus for the man with a withered hand? Matthew 12:9-13.
5. How were five thousand people MIRACULOUSLY FED by Jesus? Matthew 14:15-21. Was the POWER OF GOD that Christ possessed so great that just a TOUCH of His garment healed the sick? Matthew 14:34-36. What did Jesus even do to Lazarus by God’s power? John 11:39-45.

COMMENT: These are only a FEW of Jesus’ astounding miracles recorded in the four gospels. God’s miracle-working power was amply demonstrated through the HUMAN body of Jesus Christ. That SAME power of the

Holy Spirit can work IN and THROUGH YOU, TOO! This power is the ONLY power which can CHANGE YOU from your present evil, carnal self into a SPIRITUAL CHARACTER acceptable to God!

6. Did Jesus admit He was POWERLESS to do anything by His OWN STRENGTH? John 5:30. Then WHO did all these marvelous works? John 14:10.

COMMENT: Jesus, POWERLESS of His own human self, WAS FILLED WITH THE DIVINE POWER OF THE FATHER! The supernatural power of God the Father did the work of God through Christ's HUMAN BODY.

Jesus had EMPTIED Himself (Philippians 2:7, Literal Standard Version) of the divine glory and power He had WITH the Father from eternity! He became FLESH – just like you and I. He plainly said He could of Himself – with His own HUMAN strength – DO NOTHING! NEITHER, IN THE SAME SENSE, CAN WE!

7. Did Jesus Christ set a PERFECT EXAMPLE for us in ALL things? Should we IMITATE HIM? 1 Peter 2:21. In what other way did Jesus set us an EXAMPLE that WE SHOULD FOLLOW in His steps? John 15:10. Read also Matthew 19:17.

8. Did Jesus keep and teach more than just the letter of the law? Isaiah 42:21, KJV and Matthew 5:27, 28, 43-44.

COMMENT: Jesus revealed that God's law is a SPIRITUAL law. Today a person not only breaks the command against adultery by performing the physical act, but if, for a example, a man JUST LOOKS and LUSTS after a woman in his own HEART and MIND, he has already committed adultery with her! This MENTAL ACT disobeys the SPIRITUAL INTENT of God's great law of love as summed up in the BASIC Ten Commandments. The whole New Testament is an EXPANSION of God's law to its great SPIRITUAL INTENT and PURPOSE!

9. Was Jesus Christ able to keep the minutest spiritual intent of God's law PERFECTLY – even though He was human? Hebrews 4:14, 15; 1 Peter 2:22.

COMMENT: Satan the Devil, through his FALSE MINISTERS (2 Corinthians 11:13-15), IS DECEIVING THE WORLD into believing that HUMAN BEINGS are not required to KEEP the SPIRITUAL Law of God.

People are falsely taught that Jesus came WITHOUT the normal HUMAN nature of MORTAL flesh. They completely overlook the SUPREME FACTOR in this whole material universe – the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT when placed within man! They would like to believe that through some "special process" of His own, Christ could keep the law of God IN OUR STEAD! And, by this, they like to conclude, "We DON'T HAVE TO KEEP the SPIRITUAL LAW"!

THAT IS NOT THE TRUTH!

The human Christ KEPT the spiritual law! SO CAN WE! How? By receiving the SAME SPIRIT He received!!

What Christ did IN OUR STEAD was to DIE for us to pay the penalty of our BREAKING God's Law. And His OBEDIENCE through the Spirit within Him, is an EXAMPLE to us that we also may be obedient through the indwelling POWER of God's Holy Spirit!

Yes, Jesus was tempted in ALL POINTS LIKE WE ARE. He was composed of the SAME weak, carnal, fleshly NATURE. He was TEMPTED through the lusts of His human nature, but He obeyed ALL of God's laws PERFECTLY – for He was filled with the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT!

The Mortal Christ Raised Immortal

1. Is Christ the Captain – the Leader – of our salvation? Hebrews 2:10. Is He the Author of it too? Hebrews 5:9.
2. Did Jesus become the first HUMAN to be SPIRITUALLY begotten and born of God? Hebrews 1:6 and Colossians 1:18.
3. How was God the Father able to resurrect the HUMAN Jesus to immortality? Romans 8:9-11.

COMMENT: Romans 8:10 tells us, "the SPIRIT IS life because of RIGHTEOUSNESS" – that is, "the [Holy] Spirit is [eternal] life because of [SPIRITUAL] RIGHTEOUSNESS." Christ, as we have seen, was begotten by the Father's Holy Spirit. Its power DWELT in Christ and helped to keep Him spiritually clean – SINLESS – until the end.

Christ is the Leader of our salvation – He set the PATTERN for the way we MUST follow. The indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT within us NOW IS clearly as

necessary as its presence was within Christ, if we are to expect the Father to raise us to immortality also! Without it we can have NO hope of a RESURRECTION to eternal life!

4. Did Christ live His life in the apostle Paul? Galatians 2:20. Since He did, wasn't Paul's hope of a resurrection to immortality certain, AS LONG AS Christ CONTINUED to dwell in him? 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Must all Christians also have the MIND of Christ? Philippians 2:5.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ can also live His life within you. Here's how: It is through the HOLY SPIRIT which can dwell in you as it did in Christ. Christ's mind – His perfect HOLY SPIRITUAL ATTITUDE OF OBEDIENCE – will thus be IN YOU. YOU will be "in Christ," and CHRIST will be "in you" through the COMMON indwelling of CHRIST'S and the FATHER'S Holy Spirit within you (Romans 8:9-11). The Father, Christ, and you CAN THUS BE ALL OF ONE SPIRIT – all of ONE mind – the HOLY mind.

As long as the Spirit of God dwells in you, you will be acceptable to God and be READY to be CHANGED to immortality by the POWER of the Holy Spirit at Christ's coming.

First Arrival of the Holy Spirit

1. Did Jesus promise His disciples they would receive POWER from heaven after His resurrection? Luke 24:49. WHERE did He tell them to WAIT for this PROMISED POWER? Same verse. Also Acts 1:4. Were they to be "baptized with" – that is, RECEIVE – the power of the HOLY SPIRIT in Jerusalem? Verses 5 and 8.
2. What GREAT DISPLAY OF POWER did the Holy Spirit cause on this, its first arrival, as they were waiting at Jerusalem for its coming? Acts 2:2-4, 8, 11.

COMMENT: The Spirit of God came with a SOUND as a MIGHTY RUSHING WIND!! It also came with the APPEARANCE of divided – EQUALLY DISTRIBUTED – TONGUES OF FIRE! And on this occasion it FILLED ALL 120 of the disciples and SPOKE through them in such a manner that EVERY MAN THERE FROM EVERY NATION HEARD them in HIS OWN LANGUAGE! The MIRACLE was in the HEARING, as well as in the SPEAKING! IT WAS A SPECTACULAR MANIFESTATION TO ALL THE

EARTH OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE MIRACULOUS POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

3. What was the NAME of the day on which this great display of the Holy Spirit's power occurred? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: The word "Pentecost" is a Greek word meaning "fifty," or "count fifty." The Holy Spirit came on PENTECOST, fifty days after the Sunday immediately following Jesus' resurrection (Leviticus 23:15-16).

4. Had it been FORETOLD by Christ that the apostles would have supernatural power after they received the Holy Spirit? Acts 1:8. What were they to DO with this POWER? Same verse and Mark 16:15, 17-18. Notice especially verse 17.

COMMENT: The sudden, spectacular, awe-inspiring exhibit of divine power working within these men on the day of Pentecost, heralded to the whole world the BEGINNING of the time when all who would thirst for the Holy Spirit CAN receive it!

It marked the BEGINNING of the climaxing act of God's supreme creative work. It opened the era foretold by God long ago when He said to His ancient nation Israel, and through it to the WHOLE WORLD, "The days come ... that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah ... I [NOT man, but God] will put My LAW IN THEIR INWARD PARTS, and write it IN THEIR HEARTS" (Jeremiah 31:31, 33, KJV and Hebrews 8:8-10).

This mighty rushing of the Spirit down to our earth marked the ADVENT of the POWER which God would use to ENGRAVE HIS LAW WITH IN THE HEARTS of those who surrender themselves to Him! It is the POWER of His HOLY SPIRIT which He offers to place within us! That is why God made this such a spectacular and momentous event. It was of tremendous import to all mankind.

In this event we see God's notice to the world that He is ready, from that time forward, to SUPERNATURALLY STRENGTHEN those who receive His Holy Spirit, so that Christ can ESTABLISH the New Covenant with them at His second coming. At that time He will ask those who are thus strengthened to be His collective "wife" for all eternity in the Kingdom of God!

But the WORLD IS completely unaware of the great IMPORT of the miracles which occurred at the advent of the Holy Spirit! How dull can a dull-minded world be? It's time to WAKE UP – it's LATER than most people think!

On that particular Day of Pentecost occurred an experience UNIQUE in all history. As Peter explained, it was the ADVENT of the OTHER COMFORTER – the Holy Spirit – from HEAVEN.

Yes, the Holy Spirit came with POWER on the Day of Pentecost, 31 A.D., and it HAS BEEN HERE EVER SINCE! But for nearly 2,000 years now, most of the world has not received this power– the ONLY means by which men could receive the happiness and blessings they CRAVE SO desperately!

Currently in this age, most in the world are cut off from God. There are those selected individuals with whom God chose to work with now that He reserved to Himself. Those are called the elect (more on God's calling is available in the free online booklet, *Is God Calling You?*).

During this 6,000-year stage of His plan, they are called to carry out special assignments in this age (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:20-28), as well as to be prepared to assist after the first AND second resurrections. The elect of this age will be able to relate to, and assist, those who are to be called in the age to come.

In this age, only a few will truly find Christ as Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:13-14:

13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Remember that this is the same Jesus who came to save more than a few. And He will in the age to come, since only a few were prophesied to remain faithful in this age.

Would a loving God make the way so difficult that few would ever be able to be saved?

No, of course not!

God made it difficult in this age so that the vast

majority of people who ever lived could be saved. That is the plan. More on that is found in our free book, available online at ccog.org, titled *Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come?* Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.

Apostles Miraculously Strengthened!

The apostles were mortal human beings just as you and I. But they received the great POWER of the Holy Spirit. That is why the Holy Spirit was sent – to spiritually strengthen PEOPLE.

Notice what other MANIFESTATIONS OF POWER the apostles showed by reason of the Holy Spirit dwelling within and WORKING THROUGH them.

1. How SPIRITUALLY WEAK were the apostles BEFORE they received the Holy Spirit? Did they even slumber the night before Christ was crucified? Matthew 26:40-45.
2. How SPIRITUALLY WEAK WAS Peter BEFORE the Holy Spirit came into him on the day of Pentecost? Matthew 26:69-70. How many times did Peter DENY he knew Christ, whom He actually knew so well? Verse 75. Was he CONVERTED then? Luke 22:32, KJV.

COMMENT: Peter was so weak spiritually BEFORE he received the Holy Spirit, that he even denied three times that he knew Jesus.

The other disciples were in the same condition. They didn't have the SPIRITUAL STRENGTH of character to stay awake as Jesus prayed before being taken by the Roman soldiers. Then when the soldiers came, they FORSOOK Jesus and FLED in fear! (Matthew 26:56)

3. But how did Peter become AFTER the Holy Spirit came into him – AFTER he was CONVERTED? Acts 2:14.

COMMENT: A MIRACULOUS CHANGE came over Peter! Peter spoke BOLDLY to the multitudes gathered in Jerusalem. FULL OF POWER, he and the other 119 disciples preached Christ so MIGHTILY and CONVINCINGLY, that 3,000 people repented of their sins and were baptized on that memorable day of Pentecost! (Acts 2:41)

Peter's power, through the Spirit, became SO GREAT

that even those in his SHADOW were healed! (Acts 5:15, 16)

4. What was Peter's first miracle? Acts 3:2, 4-8. Did Peter and John take any PERSONAL CREDIT for this miracle? Acts 3:12-13, 16. Or did Peter ascribe it to the healing power of the HOLY SPIRIT? Verse 12.
5. Did all the other apostles also become strong and possess GREAT POWER AFTER they received the Holy Spirit? Acts 4:31, 33.
6. Did Philip perform miracles SIMILAR to those of Christ's? Acts 8:5-7. And Stephen also? Acts 6:8.
7. Did Paul also perform Christ's works – miracles similar to Christ's? Acts 14:3, 8-10. Read also Acts 28:3, 5.

COMMENT: Shortly AFTER the apostle Paul was MIRACULOUSLY struck down and converted by Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-22), he began to be such a great INSTRUMENT in God's hands, that he became one of the mightiest apostles of the New Testament! (Paul's name was originally Saul. Later it was changed to Paul. Acts 13:9.)

8. What are some of the OTHER miracles the apostles performed by the POWER of God? Read Acts 5:12-16; 9:36-41 and 13:6-11.

COMMENT: The apostle Peter, Paul, and the other apostles, were performing the very "signs" and WONDERS Jesus said they would do AFTER they RECEIVED GOD'S POWER!

The DEMAND on Paul's time became so great that he was unable to visit all the sick who lived at a distance. God therefore honored a SPECIAL MEANS! Paul ANOINTED and PRAYED OVER PIECES of CLOTH – handkerchiefs and aprons – and sent them to those requesting prayer for healing – and THEY WERE HEALED! (Acts 19:11-12.) By the pieces of cloth which were a reminder? No! But by the very POWER OF GOD! That SAME power works in the SAME manner today through the TRUE ministers of God!

The apostles of the New Testament truly did perform the works of Christ! They did the very WORK of God the FATHER which His Holy Spirit BEGAN in and through the PERSON OF Jesus in the human flesh. That work was then continued through the COLLECTIVE body of disciples which is the BODY OF CHRIST – the CHURCH

OF GOD!

That Church continues to EXIST TODAY! It is composed of God-called and SPIRIT-EMPOWERED Christians performing this SAME work! The "fruits" being produced positively IDENTIFY the true Church of God today!

During the time of God's soon-coming punishment on this sinful world, will His "TWO WITNESSES" perform even GREATER miracles than Christ and the apostles did? John 14:12 and Revelation 11:3, 5-6.

Second Phase of Humanity's Creation

Humanity's creation in Eden was complete only in the PHYSICAL sense. He was created a perfect PHYSICAL specimen – but NOT a perfect SPIRITUAL CREATION! He was created WITHOUT the divine SPIRITUAL POWER within him.

But EXACTLY what is this spiritual creation God desires to produce in people? Let's be SURE we understand!

1. Is God still in the PROCESS of FORMING and MOLDING man as a potter works with clay? Isaiah 64:8.
2. Did Job realize that God was forming a SPECIAL CREATION in his life? Job 14:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice especially the latter part of Job 14:15: "YOU SHALL DESIRE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS." The "work" was JOB! Job knew he was merely a piece of divine WORKMANSHIP in the hands of the active Creator. Merely a piece of PLIABLE CLAY IN THE HANDS OF THE MASTER POTTER!

3. Are converted SPIRIT-LED Christians being fashioned for a SPECIFIC purpose? Isaiah 43:7 and Ephesians 2:10.

COMMENT: The word "we" in New Testament language refers to spirit-begotten CHRISTIANS. WE, then, are God's WORKMANSHIP. Yes, we are "created" – NOW BEING CREATED – "FOR GOOD WORKS" – unto perfect SPIRITUAL CHARACTER in OBEDIENCE to God.

So what God is actually creating in Spirit-directed humans is the SUPREME MASTERPIECE of all His works of creation! He is in the process of creating millions – yes, BILLIONS – of what will become PERFECT, SPIRIT-BORN Sons of God at the resurrection!

God is creating His supreme masterpiece by two distinct steps: Man, the CLAY MATERIAL CREATION (Genesis 1), is only the first phase of what is to become God's finished SPIRITUAL creation. For man, the CLAY MODEL, has to be fashioned and molded by EXPERIENCE AND WITH THE POWERFUL HELP OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, into the finished SPIRITUAL masterpiece of all God's creation!

But before the second phase of man's creation – his spiritual growth – begins, God the Father must FIRST BEGET US by placing His Holy Spirit WITHIN US. We are then IMPREGNATED, so to speak, by the "seed" or germ of eternal life. It is the BEGETTAL of the life of God within our minds! We then compare to a newly BEGOTTEN babe in its mother's womb that BEGINS TO GROW!

4. What are we CALLED when the Father begets us with His Spirit? 1 John 3:1 and Romans 8:14-17.

COMMENT: We are called the (begotten) Sons of God.

5. Do we partake of the NATURE and CHARACTERISTICS of GOD when begotten? 2 Peter 1:3-4.
6. What is the BASIC characteristic of God's nature? 1 John 4:16. Is this the SAME LOVE that will ENABLE US to "fulfill" – to OBEY – God's laws? Romans 13:10 and 5:5.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit of God imparts God's love to us. God's love makes possible our performance of SPIRITUAL WORKS – acts – PLEASING in God's sight! Thus we fulfill God's Law of LOVE! IF YOU have God's love, you will – BY THE POWER OF GOD, and NOT by your own human strength – KEEP ALL TEN OF HIS COMMANDMENTS! But YOU MUST CHOOSE to obey and then CONTINUALLY STRIVE to DO God's will! This is YOUR PART in the strengthening of your WILL and CHARACTER.

No one who CONTINUES to flagrantly break God's Law of Love has received the Spirit of God or has the POWER of God working in him!

But if we have God's Spirit in us, then God's NATURE, which is LOVE, will RADIATE from us in obedience and good works.

7. If we are begotten and grow by God's Spirit, can we eventually ATTAIN to the VERY LIKENESS and

STATURE – the very COMPOSITION - of God? Psalms 17:15 and 1 John 3:2.

COMMENT: We are now only the SPIRITUALLY begotten Sons of God. But we will be LIKE Him when we are BORN of God's Spirit!

We Must Grow Spiritually

1. Must the lives of Spirit-begotten Christians be completely CHANGED from their former SINFUL WAY of living? Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23-24. Is this changing process producing the NEW "creation" in humans? 2 Corinthians 5:17.

COMMENT: YOUR WHOLE LIFE and your ATTITUDE of mind MUST BE COMPLETELY CHANGED – CONVERTED! This TRANSFORMATION (not just a REFORMATION) IS A TREMENDOUS UNDERTAKING. It requires a MIRACLE! Such a change would be impossible to bring about or account for, except it were by a SUPERNATURAL ACT of Almighty God – your BEGETTAL by the Holy Spirit! The receiving and INDWELLING of the Holy Spirit is a RENEWING OF THE MIND.

As far as being a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) a newly begotten child of God is a new creature. When a parent begets a child, it is a new creature, though not yet born, and can also be considered as being enrolled in the family. Hence, the Christian life MUST be a change from before.

God stands pledged, upon your REAL and THOROUGH repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 2:38), to begin the performance of this tremendous miracle by literally putting His Holy Spirit WITHIN YOU. But God CANNOT work this complete change in your life unless you are WILLING to SURRENDER YOURSELF TO HIM and SUBMIT to the process!

2. Do begotten Christians need to GROW SPIRITUALLY? 2 Peter 3:18. Are we then compared to little children growing up again? 1 Peter 2:2 and Matthew 18:2-3.
3. After whom are we to PATTERN our lives as we grow spiritually? Ephesians 4:15. And to what END RESULT? Ephesians 4:13. Will Christ live IN and THROUGH US? Colossians 1:27; Galatians 2:20 and 1 John 4:2, 4.

COMMENT: Your impregnation by the Holy Spirit –

the very SPIRIT and ATTITUDE of God Almighty – will plant within you the SEED of the DIVINE NATURE of God. It will DEVELOP HIS CHARACTER in you!

Upon receiving His Spirit, you will begin to THINK as God thinks, SEE things as God does, and you will begin to ACT as He acts. YOUR WHOLE ATTITUDE WILL BEGIN TO CHANGE. You'll be more like God every day because you will have the MIND of Jesus Christ.

And if, in this life, we GROW SPIRITUALLY and our thinking and ways have been CHANGED until we really do become new characters, CONFORMED to God's will; then that clay model, WORKED OVER, fashioned, and shaped into the ROUGH spiritual image of God, will suddenly be changed into the FINISHED, perfected SPIRITUAL CREATION at the RESURRECTION! We shall then be BORN of God – we shall then BE Gods! (John 3:5-7; 1 Corinthians 15: 49-53)

Power for the Asking!

1. How READILY will God give us His Holy Spirit of power today? Luke 11:10-13. But are there PRIOR CONDITIONS to receiving it? Acts 2:38 and 5:32. These CONDITIONS are EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER!

COMMENT: If we repent, and are reconciled to God by the DEATH of Christ (Romans 5:10), THEN God is more willing to give us His Spirit than we are willing to give bread to our children. But we must WANT to obey God and GIVE OUR STRONGEST COOPERATION to the Holy Spirit which will give us the spiritual strength to OBEY God!

2. Do begotten children of God have DIRECT ACCESS to the Father in heaven? Ephesians 2:13, 18 and Hebrews 10:19-20.
3. Did Jesus instruct us HOW to establish this contact? Matthew 6:6.

COMMENT: Ever since the Holy Spirit – the POWER of God – arrived on Pentecost, 31 A.D., we have the opportunity to come DIRECTLY to the very THRONE OF THE FATHER IN PRAYER, through Jesus Christ and the HOLY SPIRIT! What a priceless privilege!

In the Old Testament times NO ONE prayed to the Father as NO ONE addressed God as "FATHER" then.

And only an EXTREMELY FEW could then address the God who was to become the SON! But the Son, Jesus Christ, came to DECLARE TO ALL who the Father is (John 1:18) – to declare that all may now be begotten of Him and have ACCESS to Him through the Holy Spirit!

4. What are the SPECIAL ADVANTAGES of this close relationship with our Heavenly Father? Matthew 21:22 and Hebrews 4:16. WHY may we receive what we ask? 1 John 3:22.
5. Why was Jesus ALWAYS heard and answered by the Father? Hebrews 5:7.

COMMENT: Jesus was in CONSTANT CONTACT with the Father. He received ANSWERS to His prayers and performed mighty miracles through the POWER of God's Spirit in Him! We may ALSO establish this very SAME CONTACT and receive answers today as Jesus did!

6. What are some of the RESULTS, or "fruits," that are made manifest in our lives if we possess God's Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23 and Romans 15:13.
7. What SPECIAL "gifts" are bestowed by God through the power of the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-11.

COMMENT: Just imagine! These are some of the ADDITIONAL things God gives those who surrender their lives to Him and receive His Holy Spirit! God divides these special GIFTS among certain ones in His Church as HE wills.

8. Which is the GREATEST attribute or characteristic God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit? Is it "LOVE"? 1 Corinthians 13:13. Skim rapidly the whole chapter.
9. How MUCH of God's Spirit can we receive in this life? Ephesians 1:13-14, KJV and 2 Corinthians 5:5, KJV, 2 Corinthians 1:22.

COMMENT: An "earnest" is a "TOKEN or PLEDGE of what is to come" – according to Webster's Dictionary. Therefore, the "earnest" of God's Spirit is a SMALL PART of the Spirit and power with which one is imbued at first. But after this initial imbuelement, we GROW spiritually, and at Christ's return, we'll BECOME SPIRIT – become COMPLETELY COMPOSED of God's Spirit of power!

Paul received only a comparatively SMALL PORTION of the Holy Spirit as compared to the FULNESS of the Spirit that Jesus received (John 3:34). Yet look at what it did through Paul! By the example of Paul's life WE know that we also can be GREATLY STRENGTHENED.

10. Do we receive all AT ONE TIME enough of God's HOLY SPIRIT – His divine power – to last forever? 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Philippians 1:19.

COMMENT: God does NOT put within us a sort of miracle-producing dynamo which CONTINUALLY GENERATES this POWER. WE MUST BE CONTINUALLY RECEIVING THIS POWER! Remember, the Holy Spirit is compared to water – it FLOWS. Jesus said the power of God shall flow out of our innermost being! (John 7:38) God's power is ACTIVE – DYNAMIC! It is not static. It flows INTO us; and then OUT OF US in performing God's will! (cf. Mark 5:28-30)

You cannot receive a SUPPLY of God's Spirit and then bottle it up within you. It CIRCULATES – like electricity in a complete circuit – from God, INTO YOU, and then OUT FROM YOU in LOVE, OBEDIENCE, faith, joy, patience, and then back to God! And it MUST BE RENEWED IN US DAILY (2 Corinthians 4:16) – through contact with God IN PRAYER and Bible study! THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER!

Here is something from the old Worldwide Church of God that you might find helpful:

Activate the Holy Spirit

We must never allow worldly pulls or influences to “quench” the effect of God's Spirit in our lives (I Thes. 5:19). Rather, as the Apostle Paul wrote Timothy, we must “STIR UP the gift of God” that is within us (II Tim. 1:6) — that is, to rekindle it, add fuel through Bible study and prayer so it will blaze up like a spiritual fire! Then we must use it so it can continually flow out of us and produce its good fruits.

It is imperative that true Christians regularly study and drink in of the examples of faith and power from the Bible. The spiritual words of instruction from God's Word will inspire renewed dedication and forceful action which will accelerate the flow of the Holy Spirit into and through our persons.

Each time we act on God's instruction we activate the Holy Spirit. The more we activate it in our lives, the more it will increase in us! And the more dynamically effective and useful we will become as instruments in the hands of the living God, thus moving the Work of God ahead with greater and greater impetus and impact!

Remember God's admonition to Zerubbabel: “... not by might, nor by [human] power, but BY MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). This Work which we are called to do can only be completed and accomplished through the agency of that Spirit. Human reserves and abilities are not enough!

Let's never forget that fact. And let us individually say with the Prophet Micah: “But truly I am FULL OF POWER by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might ...” (Micah 3:8). We will then have more faith, deeper understanding, greater Love, and increased resources with which to do the Work! (Knowles B. Use the Power of God! Good News, May-June 1972)

The Spiritual POWER available through the Holy Spirit is the power needed for SELF-MASTERY, for accomplishment, success, abundant JOY, PEACE OF MIND and the HAPPINESS we all desire!

Do you begin to grasp how much BETTER a life man could live if he were REALLY IN CONTACT with His Creator? And just think! ALL this IS available to YOU for the ASKING!

Spirit the Key to Glorious Immortality

Let's notice how having the Holy Spirit within us now is the key to receiving eternal life and glory.

1. Did Jesus Christ DIE? 1 Corinthians 15:3. Was He resurrected FROM THE DEAD? Verse 4.
2. Did God the Father raise Christ from death? Ephesians 1:17, 19-20.

COMMENT: Note that verse 17 tells us that it is God the Father and Christ who are being discussed. Verse 20 says, ““He [the Father] raised Him [Christ] from

the dead and seated Him [Christ] at His right hand in the heavenly places.” So, it was GOD THE FATHER who raised Christ from death to immortality by the POWER of the Holy Spirit.

3. Are there many PROOFS of Christ’s resurrection from the dead? 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.

4. Was Christ the FIRST one of MANY to be resurrected to ETERNAL life? Acts 26:23; Colossians 1:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:23.

COMMENT: Christ is the “firstborn among MANY BRETHREN” (Romans 8:29).

5. Does the Father promise Christians that He will also raise them to immortality – if His Holy Spirit is dwelling within them? Romans 8:11 and 1 Corinthians 6:14. “The Lord” here is Christ.

6. WHEN and HOW QUICKLY will our “change” come? 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

7. When changed at the resurrection, will we become as Jesus Christ is TODAY? Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2. What TYPE of body was Jesus changed into at His resurrection? 1 Corinthians 15:44-45.

COMMENT: We will ALSO be given a body then like Christ has now! The outstanding difference between the body we now have and the one we will be given, is that while the one we now have is a NATURAL or MORTAL body, the one we SHALL receive will be a SPIRITUAL body!

If we are ALIVE at the time of the resurrection, our MORTAL BODIES shall suddenly be changed. If we have DIED, we will be resurrected from the grave with a new, spiritual body!

8. Was Jesus, with His SPIRITUAL body, able to suddenly APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR? Luke 24:36-37, 31. Did he PASS THROUGH barriers or walls? John 20:19.

COMMENT: When we become Spirit, we’ll be able to perform these SAME miraculous feats! We will not be subject to PHYSICAL LAWS then, for we will not be composed of matter, but of SPIRIT – the Spirit of POWER!

9. Will our spiritual bodies be capable of TRAVELING through space at TREMENDOUS SPEED? John 20:17

and Matthew 28:9.

COMMENT: Notice that Christ had been able to travel to the Father in heaven and return to earth on the SAME DAY. Here again is the power of the Holy Spirit IN ACTION!

10. When necessary, will we be able to change into a body of PHYSICAL FLESH and bone so mortal eyes can see us? Luke 24:37-39.

COMMENT: A spirit is COMPOSED of spirit essence. It is not composed of PHYSICAL flesh. Since man is in the LIKENESS of God, both man and God have form and shape. But one is composed of flesh, while the other is composed of SPIRIT!

11. Once made spirit, can we ever DIE again? John 10:28, cf. Romans 8:13, Revelation 20:6.

12. Was Jesus to be “GLORIFIED” AGAIN after His resurrection? John 17:4-5. How does Christ’s GLORIFIED BODY appear to those who are privileged to see Him as He is? Revelation 1:13-16.

COMMENT: As God, Christ had a glorious, resplendent, spiritual body before He took the human form. Now Christ is GLORIFIED again.

Christ’s SPIRIT BODY IS SO POWERFUL that it radiates light AS BRIGHT AS THE SUN!

13. Will God GLORIFY His Spirit-begotten children at the resurrection by giving them this SAME GREAT POWER AND GLORY? Romans 8:17 and Colossians 3:4.

14. Did Jesus give his disciples a fleeting glimpse of this FUTURE GLORIFIED CONDITION when He was “transfigured”? Matthew 17:1-2. Note that this was a VISION they saw concerning the future (verse 9).

COMMENT: This ULTIMATE POWER we shall receive at the resurrection will be SO GREAT, IT WILL MAKE OUR SPIRIT BODIES SHINE AS THE SUN, and our clothes will be as DAZZLING LIGHT! All this can come later by having God’s Spirit working within US NOW!

15. What other scripture gives us a picture of our GLORIFIED BODIES? Daniel 12:2-3. Wouldn’t you also like to POSSESS such a body someday?

SUMMARY

The astounding TRUTH of the Bible is that God desires to place within mankind the great power of His Holy Spirit – as a FREE GIFT! By this power, man can keep God's perfect, holy, SPIRITUAL laws.

This is how God is now fulfilling HIS part of the New Covenant with those He has spiritually begotten. He is NOW ENGRAVING HIS ROYAL LAW IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF TRUE CHRISTIANS THROUGH HIS SPIRIT!

God is in the process of forming His SPIRITUAL creation in man – but only in those who have YIELDED to Him and have allowed His Spirit to enter and beget them as His spiritual sons! Yes, God IS the Potter and we ARE the clay!

This life is the training ground. We are here for the

express purpose of learning how to rightly direct the vast powers God will give us when WE ARE born as His Sons – powers so TREMENDOUS the mind of man cannot now conceive!!

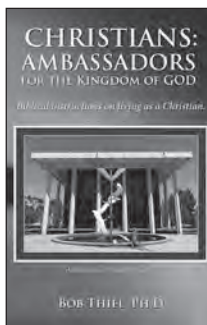
At the RESURRECTION our spiritual creation will be COMPLETE. We will then have the MIND of God IN FULL! We'll be COMPLETELY COMPOSED of Holy Spirit, and BE THE VERY SONS OF GOD IN GOD'S KINGDOM! Christ will have COMPLETED His New Testament Covenant with us. We shall then be able to obey His laws PERFECTLY – FOREVER! (1 John 3:9)

Few grasp how GREAT and ALL-POWERFUL GOD REALLY IS, AND HIS LOVING KINDNESS IN MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO HAVE HIS MIND AND GREAT POWER!

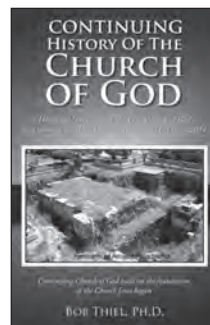
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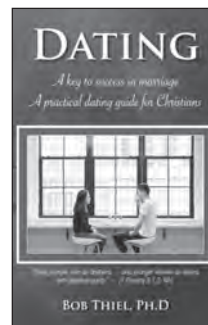
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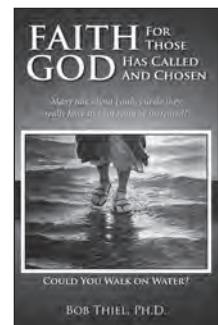
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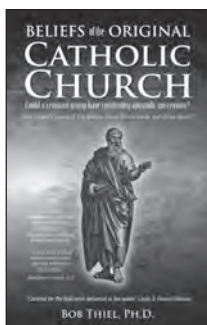
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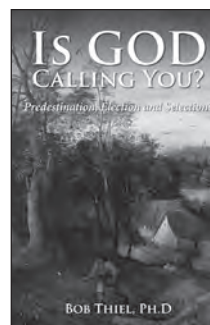
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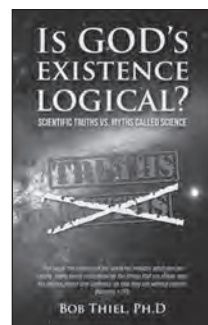
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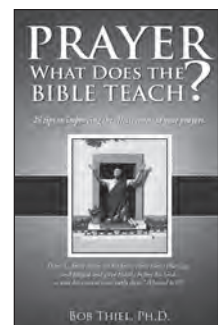
Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church



Is God Calling You?



Is God's Existence Logical?



Prayer: What Does the Bible Teach?

The Gospel in the Old Testament

By David Jon Hill

This article was originally published in the July 1963 edition of the old Plain Truth magazine (hence is considered to be public domain under current U.S. copyright law). It is shown here reformatted and with minor edits.

What has the Old Testament to do with the Gospel? Why is it even included in the Bible? How did Jesus, Peter and Paul preach the Gospel?

JESUS CHRIST never read the New Testament! Yet He preached the Gospel. He quoted from Scripture!

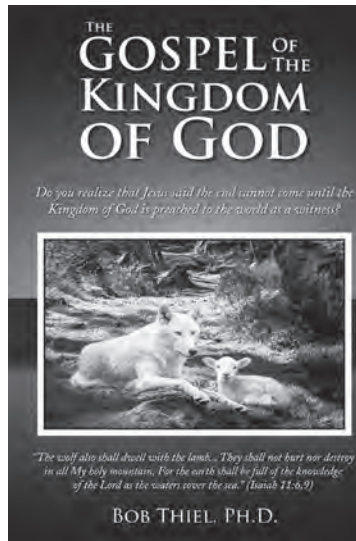
John the Baptist preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. preached a sermon of salvation that brought three thousand people to repentance — he quoted many scriptures, yet not one was from the New Testament. After his conversion, the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ — yet through most of his ministry he did not have access to any of what we recognize as the New Testament today — in fact, he himself was responsible for writing fourteen books of it!

The only Bible that Jesus and Peter and Paul were conversant with and preached from was what we regard today as the Old Testament!

Old Testament Useless?

The Bible is a consistent best seller year after year! It has been translated into nearly every language and dialect used by mankind! Yet this most translated and consistent best seller is the least read and studied of any of the best sellers! And even those who do read and study the Bible consistently ignore the largest part of it — the Old Testament.

Somehow the term “Old” Testament as opposed to the “New” Testament has made most people feel that it is not necessary to read the Old — almost as if it



had nothing to do with the New, or as if it were a completely useless part of the Bible. Yet, consistently, millions upon millions of copies of the Bible, including the Old Testament, are reproduced and sold.

The Bible has 66 books in the King James Version. Comparing it to a novel or a textbook, if each of these books were just a long chapter — wouldn't it seem strange to begin reading a book at chapter 40? There are 39 books in the Old Testament and the book of Matthew beginning the New Testament is the 40th book of the Bible — comparable to

the 40th chapter of a textbook or novel!

Are those first 39 chapters of God's book unnecessary — or did God have a reason for inspiring them?

How Did the Apostles Preach the Gospel?

How did Jesus Christ preach the Gospel? To what authority did He appeal? Where did He get His ideas of love and grace — of forgiveness and salvation — of the message of the Kingdom of God? When Peter preached about grace and salvation, upon what authority did he base his statements? When the Apostle Paul expounded and proclaimed to the Gentiles about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, from what books did he preach?

New Testament Answers!

Certainly the “Golden Rule” is accepted as summing up the basic teachings of Jesus Christ — of New Testament theology.

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matt. 7:12).

But how many of you read the last part, of this verse — or heard the last part of this verse explained and expounded — the last part of this verse which, in the words of Jesus Christ, explains where He got the

idea of the Golden Rule? The LAST PART of this verse reads, “for THIS [the Golden Rule] IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS!” (Matt. 7:12).

Jesus Christ was NOT doing away with the Old Testament! His very life and Gospel message was an explanation of the Old Testament — a clarification, a magnification. When the Pharisees and Sadducees would ask Him a trick question, He would consistently ask them, “Have you not read...?” (Matt. 12:3, 5, etc) He was more conversant with the Old Testament than the ablest of scribes!

Yes, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Gospel of love — but what kind of love? Let Jesus Christ Himself explain this to you — when a hypocritical lawyer of the Pharisees asked Him a question to tempt Him, asking which was the greatest commandment, Jesus Christ answered him saying,

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self [this is the great commandment of love that Jesus Christ gave — the “new” commandment, see I John 2:7-8]. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40).

And Jesus quoted His answer from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19: 18! When Christ was tempted by Satan the Devil, He pointed out the over-all precept,

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4 — also Luke 4:4).

But this was not an idea that Jesus Christ thought up independent of the Old Testament — this was not changed, New Testament theology. This tool that Jesus Christ used to resist Satan the Devil was taken directly from the pen of Moses and is quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3!

Peter's Theology

The Apostle Peter plainly showed that the whole purpose of the writing of the prophets of the Old Testament was for the use of those who are called to the Gospel of Jesus Christ! (I Pet. 1:10-12). In closing off his second epistle he warned all those who were followers of Jesus Christ that they should watch out for

individuals who twisted the meaning of the epistles of Paul — but comparing this deceitful use of Paul's epistles to the practice of those who also deceitfully use the other scriptures, the Old Testament! (II Pet. 3:15-16). The very authority of Paul's writings, Peter showed, rested on the Old Testament!

The source of the Gospel that Paul preached, is recorded for us in the book of Acts!

“And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he [Paul] expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, [the Gospel] both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23).

This historic statement regarding the teaching of the Apostle Paul was recorded at the very end of his ministry — long after he had turned from the Jews and begun to concentrate on the Gentiles.

Paul Commanded Old Testament Preaching

Paul was the apostle in charge of carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles. As an apostle he held a very high office and was also responsible for the training of many men under him. These evangelists and elders were responsible for carrying the same Gospel message to the local churches that Paul raised up, after his departure. Paul's personal instruction to the Evangelist Timothy is preserved for us to this day so that we will be able to tell how the Apostle Paul instructed the Evangelist Timothy, and all of those elders under him, to conduct their preaching, and from whence to get their information.

Using all of the power of his office, Paul said,

“I charge ye therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; PREACH THE WORD”! (II Tim. 4:1-2)

The expression “the word” is the common reference to the Old Testament — The Holy Scriptures. Just a few verses before this Paul had instructed Timothy,

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly

dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

Urging and ex-honing Timothy to study the Old Testament in order to preach Christ! Is this the kind of instruction being given in the theological seminaries today?

Or has the prophecy of Paul which he gave to Timothy in this same book already come to pass:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth ["Thy word is truth" — John 17:17], and shall be turned [from the Gospel truths of the Old Testament] unto fables [the teaching of men having turned a deaf ear to the Word of God and thought up their own theology!] (II Tim. 4:3-4).

No, Paul did not think up a new "Pauline theology" — he didn't disagree with Moses, or any of the prophets, or Jesus Christ — his instruction was, again to Timothy,

"And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures which ARE ABLE TO MAKE THEE WISE UNTO SALVATION THROUGH FAITH which is in Christ Jesus. ALL SCRIPTURE [all of the Bible that today's Christians regard as the Old Testament] is given by inspiration of God [not the ideas of men about God, but the writings of holy men inspired by the Holy Spirit prior to the time of Jesus Christ, see II Peter 1:21] and IS PROFITABLE [Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and using the full authority of his apostleship states in a letter of instruction to a fellow minister, in the fulfillment of his duty in the ministry that the Old Testament IS PROFITABLE] for DOCTRINE [the doctrines of the Apostle Paul were not "Pauline theology" at all, but the same basic truths that were preached by Noah, a preacher of righteousness, by Abraham, by Moses, by Elijah, by John the Baptist, and by Jesus Christ — and their source was the Old Testament!], for REPROOF, for CORRECTION, for INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS [there is a way to be righteous, and that way is described in the Old Testament]" (II Tim. 3:15-16).

And this quote, you will notice, is just directly prior

to the first verse of chapter four in which Paul tells Timothy what to preach!

Lay Members Urged to Read Old Testament

The Apostle Paul had, no doctrines contrary to any single verse written from Genesis to Malachi. He never urged any — even of his Gentile converts — to ignore the Old Testament. In fact the historic record of his preaching to Gentiles at Berea, tells us that he was highly pleased by those citizens of Berea who checked up by daily Old Testament Bible reading on the things that he proclaimed to them — the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

There is one reference in the New Testament of Paul in his preaching referring to one of the poets. You know how common it is for ministers to quote from Shakespeare, Tennyson, Shelley and Keats. When Paul was speaking to the Athenians on Mars Hill he said,

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said" (Acts 17:28).

But his use of poets' clever sayings is nil in comparison to the dozens and dozens of times, in the book of Acts, and in the many epistles which he wrote, in which he quoted word for word and used as his authority the Old Testament scriptures.

In his letter to the Gentile Corinthians the Apostle Paul commanded that church to be familiar with the Old Testament:

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

Shall We Desert the New Testament?

Since the examples of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul show that their theology, ministry and Gospel were derived directly from the

Old Testament, shall we assume that we should do away with the New Testament and not read it?

No!

No, since the New Testament is just as much a part of God's Word as the Old (II Pet. 3:15-16) then we should read and study it with equal diligence. Once we understand that the New Testament is Holy Scripture just as much as the Old Testament is, then we must apply the very statement that Jesus Christ made to Satan the Devil when He was resisting him in the temptation on the Mount, and agree that we must live by EVERY WORD OF GOD — both the Old and the New Testaments.

It is only by the Spirit of God that any man is able to understand either the Old or the New Testament. There were preachers in Jesus Christ's day — the Sadducees and Pharisees, and many other splits and denominations, but they did not understand the scriptures of the Old Testament — any more than most of the ministers of today understand the New! When Paul instructed Timothy to study the Old Testament, the Holy Scriptures, he explained to him that these Holy Scriptures contained the wisdom that would bring him to salvation, but only through the FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST! (II Tim. 3:15).

New Testament Example

Is there then an example in the New Testament of an individual, 'ordained by God to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, who used as the sole basis for his preaching the Old Testament?

YES!

The eighth chapter of the book of Acts, beginning verse 26, portrays the history of how Philip brought the Gospel of God to an Ethiopian eunuch. In verse 28 it is explained that the eunuch was reading out of the book of Isaiah.

"And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS!" Acts 8:34-35).

Surely God was working with this Ethiopian eunuch,

and causing him to read in this particular verse in Isaiah. However there are more than three hundred specific prophecies regarding Jesus Christ recorded in the Old Testament — both concerning His first coming, as the humble carpenter of Nazareth to be sacrificed for the sins of the world, and regarding His second coming to be King of kings and Lord of lords ruling over the entire earth in the Kingdom of God — soon to come!

Philip's Gospel Message

Let's turn to the scripture that he was reading from in the book of Isaiah, and see just how Philip could preach Jesus Christ, Him crucified and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God — of salvation — from the Old Testament! Isaiah 53:7 was the scripture that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading:

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

In answer to the Ethiopian's question Philip, began to explain that this referred to the Son of God, sent by the Almighty Father in heaven to become a human being, to live a perfect life, and then to be sacrificed for the sins of mankind.

Beginning at the very verse the eunuch was reading, he went on to explain how all the verses of Isaiah 53 applied to Jesus Christ — but Isaiah 53 is not the only chapter in the Old Testament that applies to Jesus Christ, many more were needed for Philip to explain completely the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the eunuch — out of the Old Testament.

As any commentary will explain, and as I am sure Philip explained, he would have either turned to or explained to the Ethiopian eunuch about Genesis 3:15. This prophecy regarding Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, Eve, was to redeem mankind from his sin! This would show how the Savior of mankind was expected from the very beginning — from the time immediately after Adam and Eve committed the first sin of mankind in disobeying their God and His instructions in the Garden of Eden.

He explained Genesis 12, and Genesis 15, and Genesis

22 about the promise that the God of heaven and earth had made to Abraham, the father of all the Israelites — of how He had promised him a particular Seed that would be the joy, the glory, and the solace of all mankind — of how He was prophesied so many centuries ago! That this Seed would fulfill the promise of eternal inheritance of the whole earth, made to Abraham.

Since it was on everybody's mind at that particular time, Philip mentioned the 70 weeks' prophecy of Daniel 9, verses 24 through 27, which had everybody expecting that the Messiah would appear. He pointed out how other verses in The Old Testament explained that this Messiah when He came at first — in His first coming — would NOT be the King of kings and Lord of lords, to restore a mighty kingdom to Israel — but would be a humble man, Who would be persecuted and despised by all mankind (referring again to Isaiah 53), Who would be sacrificed, sold as a slave, rejected, Who would speak in parables, Who would suffer, Who would be betrayed by a friend, Who would be dead three days and three nights — and be RESURRECTED! Explaining these things Philip showed that since this same Jesus was now alive He would fulfill the prophecies in the future which portray Him as King of kings and Lord of lords — at His second coming, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth forever!

Using the book of Zechariah, Philip read,

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6).

Then Philip would pause and explain again to the Ethiopian eunuch that the Savior of mankind did not come first as a conquering hero and king to restore a physical kingdom to a physical Israel — not by any physical strength or might, but by the very power of the Holy Spirit this Savior came with the strength to overcome the physical pull of human nature, and live a perfect life by the strength of that Spirit. That He would cry, “Grace, grace unto it” (Zech. 4:7) regarding Jerusalem, and Israel, and the whole world!

Philip would turn over quickly (or quote from memory) to chapter 9 of Zechariah and read in verse 9:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding ... upon a colt ...” (Zech. 9:9).

Philip would explain to this Ethiopian that despite the fact that this Being had been God. in heaven, that yet He had emptied Himself of being God and become JUST A MAN (Phil. 2:5, 6, 7), a lowly man, not regarding Himself as any great Being, not trying to take over the kingdoms of the earth, but living an example — an example of perfection, living according to the laws of God, and pleasing the Creator of heaven and earth in everything that He did.

He would point out to the eunuch that, just as Herod had been told (Matt. 2:5-6) that the Savior was to be born in Bethlehem, that He was eventually to be Ruler in all Israel and that He had really existed from everlasting, that He had been God from the beginning — Micah 5:2!

More from the Book of Zechariah

Philip would again refer to the book of Zechariah and explain to the Ethiopian eunuch how it had been prophesied long ago that the One Who would come and fulfill the prophecies of the Messiah in His first coming would be sold for 30 pieces of silver — the price of a slave — (Zech. 11:12-13).

It had been prophesied long ago that Jesus Christ would not be accepted by the multitudes but rejected completely, that it was no mistake that the Son of God had been rejected of mankind:

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:22-23).

Going back to the book of Zechariah Philip would explain how it had long ago been prophesied that this Messiah would bring grace to mankind, forgiveness for their sins — unmerited though it might be, and sacrifice Himself completely for their sins!

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, THE SPIRIT OF GRACE and of supplications” (Zech. 12: 10)

Philip would explain to the Ethiopian eunuch that there was a new covenant, that this Individual brought:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:31-33).

He would show the eunuch — before Paul had a chance to write in the book of Ephesians (Eph. 6:10-17) — how Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, was to have righteousness as a breastplate, salvation as a helmet and zeal as a cloak! (Isa. 59:16-17)

Philip would turn to Psalm 22 and read the first verse — the last words of Jesus Christ on the stake as He suffered death for the sins of mankind!

“My God, my God, why halt thou forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1).

He would turn to verse 16 and show how Jesus Christ had had His hands and feet pierced with spikes, to verse 17 and show how Christ had hung in desperation on that stake, in humility and ignominy! He would turn to verse 18 and explain how the Roman soldiers had even gambled and cast lots to see who would be the owner of the fine cloak that Jesus wore.

In explaining all these things that had been prophesied so long ago, and only fulfilled recently in the Person of Jesus Christ, Philip would mention Psalm 41 verse 9 which explains,

“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”

Recounting again for the Ethiopian eunuch he would explain how that when Jesus hung on the cross He was offered gall to drink when He said that He was thirsty — but he would explain patiently to the eunuch that this had been prophesied, that Christ had expected it:

“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21).

Just as Peter did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:27-28) Philip would explain to the Ethiopian eunuch about the prophecy in the book of Psalms regarding

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps. 16:10).

He would point out the assurance of Job, when he said,

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

The Purpose of the Gospel

In explaining these things — and many more we do not have room to refer to here — Philip would point out to the Ethiopian eunuch that this was not the end but only the BEGINNING of a great plan of salvation that God Almighty had envisioned for mankind. Turning back to Zechariah 9 he would show him that even though the King would come as a lowly individual riding upon the colt of an ass at first, that He would also come in a SECOND COMING as King of kings and Lord of lords to rule the entire earth:

“And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth” (Zeck. 9:10).

There are so many books and chapters that he could refer to in prophecies regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ that it is difficult to tell which of these chapters and verses Philip may have referred to in explaining the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Ethiopian eunuch. Surely he turned to Zechariah 14 and explained that when Jesus Christ returned again He would put His feet on the very Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4) — that He would be Lord and King over all the earth (verse 9) and that at that time He would require all nations on the surface of the earth to keep His Holy Days in remembrance of the plan of the salvation of mankind! (Verses 16-19)

The AIM AND PURPOSE OF THIS GOSPEL (good news) he would point out to the eunuch is the establishment of the Kingdom of God!

Today's Good News Also

Mankind has suffered so long under the rule of fellow man, that it is certainly good news — and particularly in this age when mankind is about to destroy himself from off the face of the earth — to know that the same One Who had the compassion, love and mercy to sacrifice Himself, for the sins of mankind on this earth, some 1900 years ago, is going to return to this earth in a very short time to establish His rule of peace, His Kingdom of joy and enforce the laws that govern happiness, health and prosperity! (see the entire chapter, Isa. 11).

We lack space to explain how even all of the sacrifices of the Levitical priest-hood (especially Lev. 1-6) picture and typify the many ways in which Jesus Christ was a sacrifice for mankind. We do not have room to explain how Moses, the author of the first five books of the Bible, anticipated the coming of Jesus Christ when he was inspired to write,

“I will raise them up a Prophet [Jesus] from among their brethren, like unto thee [Moses], and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deut. 18:18).

Moses even knew that there would come some individuals who would have the gall to preach in the name of God and claim that they were His prophets, and yet speak lies in His name:

“But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deut. 18:20).

False Prophets of Both Testaments

God knew there would be scoffers, individuals who would agree to take some of the Word of God but not all of it! God knew that the great majority of mankind until the coming of His Son as King of kings and Lord of lords, would not accept the principle that Jesus Christ resisted Satan the Devil with: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

God knew this — that's why He prophesied through His servant John that He was allowing Satan the Devil

to deceive this whole world (Rev. 12:9). But that time is nearly over now — the prophecies which Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch about the second coming of Jesus Christ are just about to be fulfilled! They're going to be fulfilled in your lifetime and mine! The same Jesus Christ who walked this earth {2000} years ago as the humble son of a carpenter of Nazareth is going to return in the clouds in glory and in power and in majesty.

He is going to ask where your talent is! He is going to ask what you have done with the information that has been given to you. He is going to ask whether you believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God — both Old and New Testaments — He is going to ask you if you have been living by EVERY WORD OF GOD!

What will YOUR answer be?

What YOU Can Do

Exercise the wisdom and nobility of the Bereans mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Acts 17. Read over these many verses that have been quoted in this article, and ask the living God, Creator of heaven and earth, to help you see that He has not written one scripture in vain, that not one word He has uttered or inspired for mankind to write down will be allowed to drop to the ground unfulfilled or unheeded, but that every word that He has inspired from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 will be required especially at the hand of all those who claim to be Christians. Search these Scriptures whether these things be so!

More about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God from the Old and New Testaments is in the free online booklet: “The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.” Available online in over 100 languages at ccog.org

The Miracles of Jesus - Part 3

Feeding of 5,000 men



After Jesus heard the news that John the Baptist had been killed by Herod, He went to spend some time alone. But where Jesus went, people would follow. Even though He himself was feeling sad, He thought of others. He was concerned about their problems and if they were sick, He healed them. The people stayed with Jesus all day long.

It was getting late, so Jesus' disciples suggested to send the people away to get food, but Jesus told them 'You feed them!' The only food they could find were two small fish and five loaves, surely not enough for thousands of people.

Jesus who had healed so many, who had performed many miracles could feed many from little! He looked up to Heaven, to His Father, and gave thanks. Then the loaves and fish were shared between all the people.

They all ate as much as they could and there was still plenty left over!

WORD HUNT – find words from the story: heaven – thanks – loaves – fishes – thousands – sick - hungry – healed – ate

s	d	n	a	s	u	o	h	t
f	h	u	n	g	r	y	h	h
s	i	c	a	l	a	t	e	a
i	a	s	i	c	k	a	a	n
k	t	s	h	u	v	e	l	k
l	o	a	v	e	s	h	e	s
a	t	f	n	i	s	h	d	s

Matthew 14:14 - 21

14 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. 15 When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."

16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

17 And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."

18 He said, "Bring them here to Me."

19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Further Learning

The disciples had witnessed many healings and miracles, but they seemed surprised that Jesus would

Brief Answer to a Scriptural Question



Q. Would you please explain Proverbs 26:4, 5. Verse Four reads, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.” Yet, the very next verse tells us, “Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.”

A. Actually, these two verses are not contradictory — BUT COMPLEMENTARY! The use of either verse — that is, its principle applied to a particular use — depends on the set of circumstances. Both these verses contain gems of wisdom that each one of us needs to learn to properly apply in answering other people’s questions (1 Peter 3:15).

The LAST PART OF EACH VERSE holds the KEY which unlocks the meaning of these verses — and shows them to be practical, usable and wise principles.

Verse Four reads, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him” The last part of the verse holds the KEY: don’t degrade yourself by descending to the FOOL’S LEVEL in an ARGUMENT! Don’t harangue — don’t bite back — don’t try to “argue back” with someone who is obviously trying to stir contention.

The perfect example of this is found in Luke 20:1-8. Here Christ was teaching in the temple. The Pharisees came to Him with these words: “Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?”

Quite obviously, they weren’t interested in learning anything — they weren’t coming as humble individuals hungering after new knowledge. THEY WERE THERE TO ARGUE WITH JESUS!

Continued on next page —>>>

be able to feed so many people. He is the living WORD and through Him all things were created.

Multiplying food miracles had also taken place in the Old Testament. We read of the miracle for the widow and her son in 1 Kings 17, as Elijah resides with her during the drought that God brought upon the people. He requests that she make a cake of bread for him even as she uses the last of her oil and flour.

15 So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. 16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of The ETERNAL which He spoke by Elijah.

Our creator can and will provide everything that we need. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:

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.

The food of the WORD of the Law of Love, the message of the coming kingdom, the Son of the Living God come to earth – this message and truth would go out to all the lost tribes, all the people scattered among the nations. All that Jesus did would not be forgotten; it would not die with Him.

His life, teachings, death and resurrection can give life to all who accept Him.

Notice, how Jesus handled the situation:

3 But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: 4 The baptism of John — was it from heaven or from men?"

5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" 6 But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where it was from.

8 And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." (Luke 20:3-8)

Jesus answered their question with a question! To answer their question directly would have only resulted in a verbal battle. An argument would have ensued. Jesus avoided strife by NOT answering them according to their folly.

Now, understand Verse Five in Proverbs 26. Again, the last part of the verse holds the KEY: "Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes."

In this case — if you don't answer the fool's question — if you don't accept the fool's challenge — the fool may like to THINK wrong statements are wise!

Your beliefs — your position will be ridiculed and in jeopardy. Now is the time to ANSWER "for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

The Apostle Paul had this problem False apostles in Corinth were claiming THEY WERE the true Apostles of Christ. Paul's position was in jeopardy! His office as Apostle to the Gentiles was at stake. But not that it would hurt him. The congregation would BE LED ASTRAY!

Now was not the time for silence — or clever questions! Now was the time to SMASH the contentions — to ANSWER these false apostles!

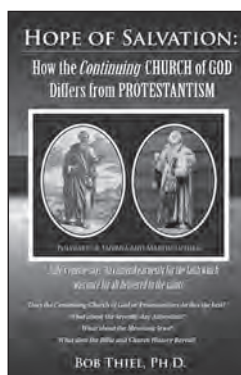
Notice 2 Corinthians 11:23 — and how Paul answered these foolish men:'

Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

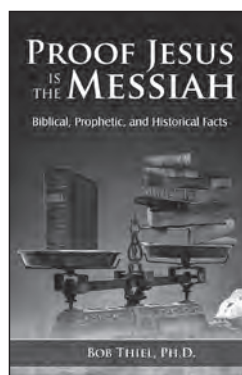
Paul showed the people HE was their true minister! He answered and debunked the claims of these other men.

There is no contradiction! But rather much wisdom in these two verses. Wisdom we need to APPLY in our daily lives!

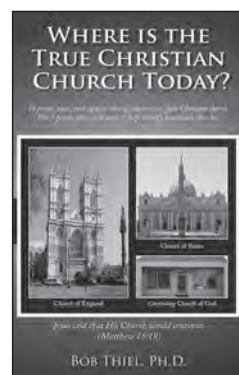
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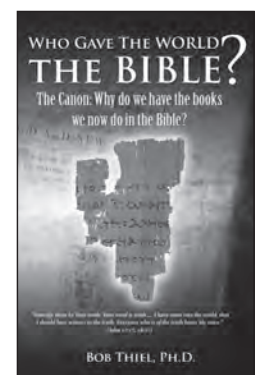
Hope of Salvation



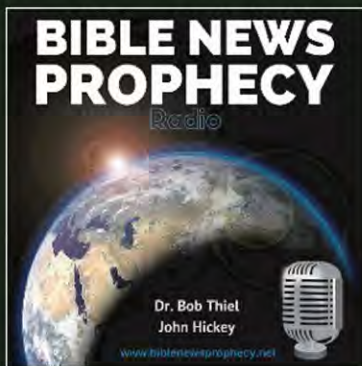
Proof Jesus is the Messiah



Where is the True Christian Church Today?



Who Gave the World the BIBLE



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.

PNIND.PH Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This website is focused on the Philippines.



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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.