

April – June 2022

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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

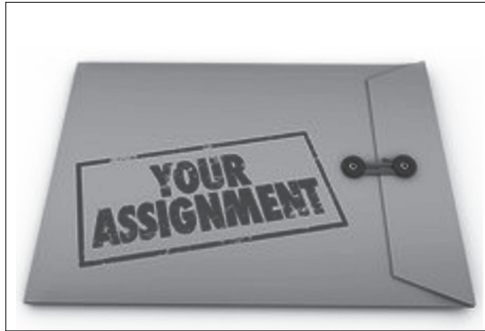


PASSOVER: Do You Take It Seriously?

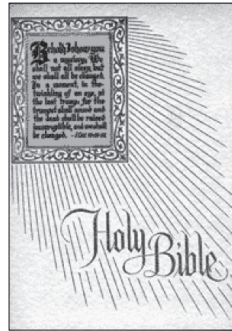
What Will Each Church
Member's Duty Be?

The Miracles of Jesus, Part 4

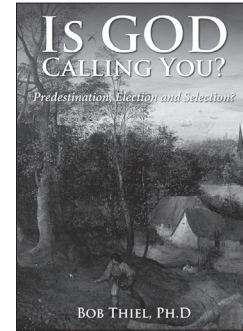
BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



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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.

About the Front Cover: Rembrandt's portrayal of the Apostle Paul. Paul admonished Christians to examine themselves before taking Passover.

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Passover: Do You Take It Seriously?

In 2022, Passover is to be observed after sunset on the Roman calendar date of April 14th, which is the 14th date of the Hebrew month known as Abib or Nisan.

That happens to be on a Thursday. In the late 4th century, the Greco-Roman Emperor Theodosius decreed the death penalty for any that would observe Passover on the 14th of Nisan/Abib.

Yet faithful Christians did it anyway (consistent also with Acts 5:29).

Currently, Christians are not subject to the death penalty in Western and most other lands if they keep Passover on the biblical date.

On Jesus' last Passover as a human being, He continued to keep it at the time of the late evening and told His disciples to keep it (Luke 22:14-19; cf. John 13:2,12-15) and on the 14th of Nisan/Abib (cf. Luke 22:14; 23:52-54).

The Passover is the first event beginning again God's annual season of Holy Days. His Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation for the whole world (see also the free booklet, online at ccog.org, Should You Observe God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?). That plan, hidden from the world in general, helps reveal why YOU cannot take this event lightly. That plan reveals that YOU have been called to know and understand God's purpose — AHEAD of the majority of humankind.

We are not just to take Passover. WE MUST EXAMINE OURSELVES before Passover as the Apostle Paul wrote:

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In

the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:23-32; NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted)

So, notice that we are talking about the annual Passover. Oddly, many think the statement "as often as you drink it," means they can take it daily (even though the Church of Rome does not normally allow its lay members to drink at all) or weekly.

Yet, also notice that the only way to insure that you are not eating of the bread or drinking of the cup unworthily is to have first gone through personal examination. Most who think they are doing this weekly (or daily) are not doing that.

Those who take Passover without examination are not properly discerning that their sins contributed Jesus' suffering for us.

Anyway, what does it mean to be worthy?

What is your attitude? Is it like that of all your neighbors?

The Apostle John wrote:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

As long as we live in this evil, Satan-ruled society, there will be tests and temptations to break God's law.

The Apostle John wrote that real Christians keep God's commands:

1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:1-6)

If you do not strive to keep the commandments, you are not a real Christian. To learn more about them, check out the free book, online at ccog.org, The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast.

Striving to keep God's commands does not mean we never sin:

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8,10)

We sin when we are tempted through our own lusts (James 1:14) to cheat, to lie in business, to boast, to swear, to gossip, to possibly commit adultery (Matthew 5:28), and to put other things before God.

And we as Christians — yes, as truly called and redeemed Christians — will slip occasionally and sin! But, as long as we are repentant, striving to overcome sin, God accepts us, applying Jesus' sacrifice (1 John 1:9). God continues to lead us. We live under grace (Ephesians 2:8).

No one is worthy of Christ's sacrifice, but not to take the Passover is to also deny Christ.

To take the Passover in a worthy manner, we must repent of our evil desires and ways, come to hate the sin that Jesus had to suffer and die for and work to set our will not to compromise God's law.

Jesus said our goal is to become perfect, and not operate like the world does:

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

Christians have to go beyond whatever cultural politeness is in your particular society.

You even are to strive to bring every thought under control:

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

You cannot, of yourself, make yourself perfect, but God can:

32 It is God who arms me with strength, And makes my way perfect. (Psalm 18:32)

Keeping the Passover and understanding all its pictures, as well as striving to keep all of God's other laws, is vital to attaining that perfection Jesus spoke of.

Notice something that the Apostle Paul wrote:

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Notice that we are to purge out the old leaven. Leaven is a symbol of sin and hypocrisy and we are to remove it. Physically, we are to remove leaven

from our houses prior to the start of the first day of unleavened bread as the Bible teaches (Exodus 12:19).

Do not think that you are so spiritual that you do not have any problems to overcome. Do not think you are so spiritual that you do not remove the physical leaven from your homes and vehicles each year.

The Apostle Paul also wrote:

5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Now is the time, just before the Passover to examine ourselves to see whether we are truly right with God and in harmony with Him and His plan.

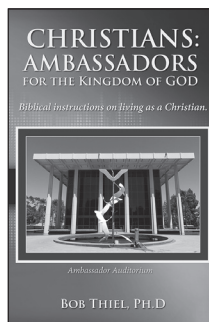
Do you realize that at this coming Passover you could eat and drink CONDEMNATION? Do you realize how high are the stakes?

To prevent condemnation, we are told to examine ourselves this time of year.

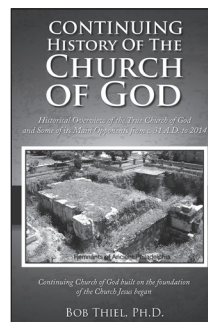
Let's be serious about Passover.

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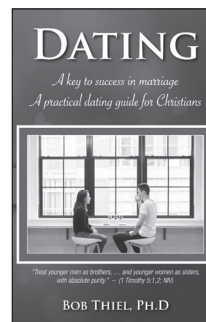
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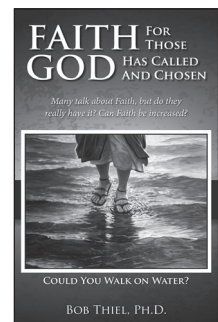
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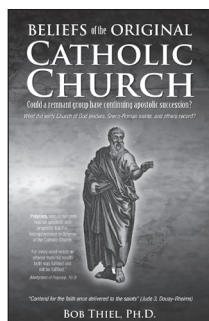
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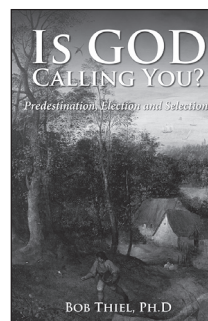
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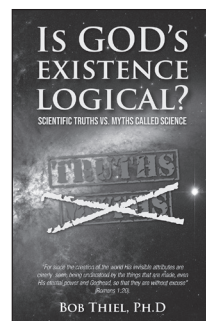
Faith for Those God has Called and Chosen



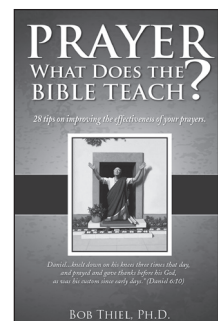
Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church



Is God Calling You?



Is God's Existence Logical?



Prayer: What Does the Bible Teach?

What Will Each Church Member's Duty Be?



(Public Domain Pictures)

By Herman Hoeh

(A longer version of this article was originally published by the no longer existing Radio Church of God in the Good News magazine in December 1963, hence the sections from that article used here are considered to be in the public domain.)

HAVE you ever thought about what YOUR JOB will be in the Kingdom? About what Christ will have you do in the millennium? About how you qualify for that responsibility?

What Christ Expects of Every Church Member

Salvation is a gift from God. It is absolutely free. But you can lose it!

Since salvation is something you can lose, then God must have set terms or conditions upon which He grants it.

It's time you understood what those terms or conditions are.

First, notice how one may lose salvation — why some are thrust out of the Kingdom of God, while others are saved.

Jesus said of those who perish:

“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer

darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 25:30)

What made this man unprofitable?

Why did Christ refuse him admission into the Kingdom of God? Wherein had he failed?

The answer is found in verses 21 and 23. To those who are to receive salvation, who will inherit the Kingdom of God, Jesus said: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

Do you grasp it? Do you see the difference? The unprofitable servant was not faithful in carrying out the few duties given him in this life! He had not learned to master his time, he had not learned to master his human nature, he had not learned to rule his family — or, if a woman — to rule her children. He hadn't improved his mind or put his income to work — even though he knew better! All he could say to his Lord was — “I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid my talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine” (verses 24 - 25).

He buried his talent. He was careless about life's responsibilities. He didn't call upon God for the help he needed. He lacked faith, which is a gift of the Spirit of God. He had not overcome. His Judge condemned him: “Thou wicked and slothful servant ...” (verse 26).

Too many members in God's Church today are like the unprofitable servant. An AWFUL fate awaits them unless they wake up! They are failing the ONE CONDITION Jesus Christ set for every church member: “To him that OVERCOMETH.”

But what does it mean to overcome?

The dictionary defines it as: “to master, prevail over, surmount, overwhelm, be victorious over, to win, to get the better of, to conquer.”

How many of you are mastering your job, your children, your human nature with God's help? Are you surmounting obstacles? Gaining the victory over bad habits? Conquering your weaknesses?

In short — are you overcoming like Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel? Israel means, in Hebrew, “prevailer with God” — or, “ruler with God.”

Do you know what Jacob will be doing in the Kingdom of God? What this Philadelphia Era of the Church

will be doing? What your individual responsibility will be?

Every one of us will be ruling under Christ — IF we have first, in this life, here and now, surrendered our wills to Him, and have let Him rule in and through us. No one will be there who has not come under Christ's authority, or who has not learned to rule with Christ in the little duties and jobs we have in this life.

Different Degrees of Authority

But just as we do not all exercise the same kind of rule and authority now, so there are different kinds of

responsibility in the Kingdom of God. Not all will have the same office. Not all will face the same duties. We are the Church that has been used to restore the truth and the pattern of God's Government.

Notice that at the end of each of the seven stages in the history of God's Church there is a definite promise for the Church which carries on God's WORK during that particular period. You will find these seven promises recorded in Revelation 2:7, 10 and 11, 17, 26 to 28; 3:4 and 5, 12, 21.

To each Church epoch DIFFERENT PROMISES are granted! Some Churches are promised a special duty.

All who overcome are to inherit the Kingdom of God — they will constitute the Kingdom. But they will not all occupy the same position in the Kingdom.

Jesus Christ does not occupy the same position as the Father. Yet both of them have eternally constituted the Kingdom of God.

The “saints shall judge the world” (I Corinthians 6:2), but some will be qualified to judge greater matters than others. “We shall reign on the earth” (Revelation

5:10), but we shall not all reign over the same territory or people.

We shall all be priests — Peter calls us even now “a royal priesthood” (I Peter 2:9) — but some will minister in greater capacity than others.

It all depends on how we've overcome — how we strive against the attractions of the world and the pull of human nature.

When Christ comes to judge us, He will “give reward unto ... small and great” (Revelation 11: 18). Some of us are smaller than others in God's sight. Some have not yielded to the law of God as much as others. Some have not worked as hard on uprooting the power of human nature as others — they have not let God's law govern their lives to the same degree as others.

In the Kingdom or Family of God there will be individuals of different degree. But for each individual there will be a responsibility, a job. Not the same job, of course! — for we are not all called to the same office. But every office is needed. An entire CIVILIZATION. God's kind of civilization, God's way and not man's way. It will take literally millions of different jobs to create civilization as it ought to be.

YOUR JOB will be what you will find the most pleasure in doing.

We do not all get the same pleasure out of the same thing. That is why God has not called us all to the same office.

Notice, now, what the Church today is promised — and this includes you if you continue as an overcomer and resist temptation and end up as victor in your trials.

What This Church Is Promised

Open your Bible to Revelation 3:10-12. Here is what it says: “Because thou [this Church] hast kept the word of My patience” — we have patiently kept God's word in a gainsaying world — “I,” responds Jesus, “also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

If we hold fast to the end, notice what the reward of this Church will be in the Kingdom of God: “Him

that overcometh [this includes anyone, not just the ministry] will I make a pillar [or main support] in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, New Jerusalem: and ... my new name.”

In Galatians 2:9 you will read that James, Peter and John seemed to be “pillar” in the early Church. They were leaders! That responsibility is what God promises to us in God’s Church today. We are to qualify — not for David’s office, not for the apostles’ offices — but as spiritual pillars or leaders — the main supports in God’s House [symbolically called “temple” in Revelation 3:12] for all eternity. A pillar is the main support in a temple!

Think of it! Being able to judge at Headquarters in Jerusalem, all the varied problems of the whole world! No human court could begin to do what God promises we shall be qualified to perform.

Notice, too, the Scripture: “He shall go out no more.” We are never to be removed from that reward and responsibility. Think of that! We are to be at Headquarters — setting policies — determining those decisions that need to come to Headquarters. (Compare Acts 15 with this.)

But more than that, this Church — the Philadelphia era — is to have the name of the capital city of the universe — the headquarters of the world. That is where we are to be centered. The pillars of the Church ought always to be at Headquarters so that all may appeal to it for decisions. All of you are being trained for this job now — even if it is only by learning

to pray for the work at Headquarters and by sending to Headquarters your tithes for the conduct of the work of this Church.

So let us all hold fast to the responsibility given us and do it the very best we can. We are all to be judged according to what we have. Many who seem to be small now will become great spiritual pillars tomorrow — and for all eternity. And some who seem to be greater today may not appear to be so

great tomorrow. God is no respecter of persons.

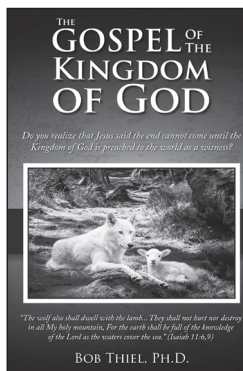
God will not make of you what you are not willing to become!

What wonderful truth about the Government of God which lies hidden within these seven small letters! What wonderful promises are open to us — undreamed — of powers to remake the world and to be happy doing it! And to think that God extends to this Church as a body the positions of “PILLARS” in His Work.

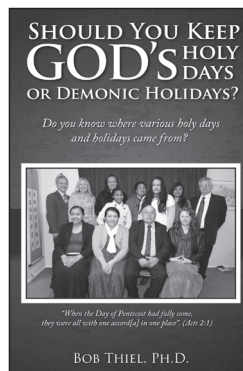
Not everyone called to be an apostle was an overcomer — Judas departed from the faith. And not every one of you will succeed. But God’s promise stands firm. We CAN — if we overcome ourselves — STAND TOGETHER AS PILLARS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

For more on God’s plan for you, check out our free book, available at ccog.org titled “Mystery of God’s Plan: Why Did God Create Anything? Why Did God Make You?”

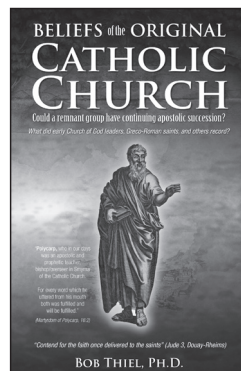
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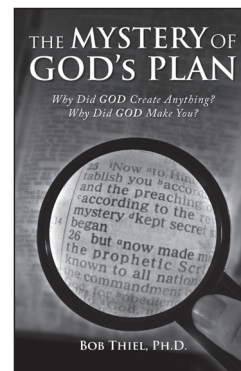
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God



Should You Keep God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays



Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church



The Mystery of God's Plan

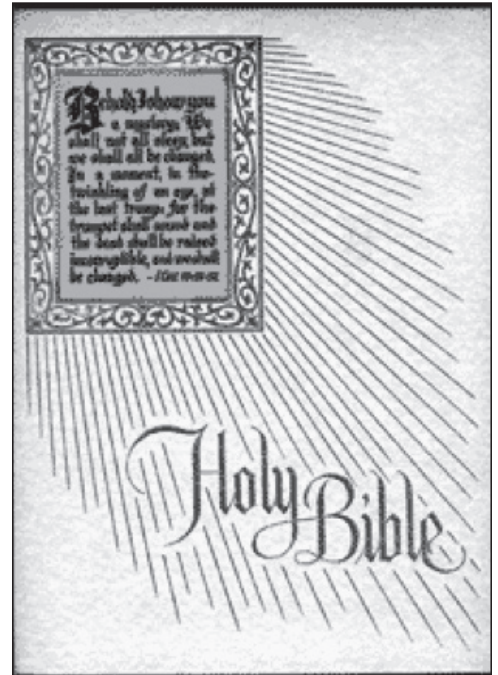
STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE

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.

LESSON 21: HUMAN NATURE

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

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THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD

GOD CALLS our world “this present EVIL world” (Galatians 1:4, KJV). And with GOOD REASON! But do you BELIEVE it?

Take a good look at the world today and you’ll see WHY! The news is rife with war, murder, riots, theft, rape, queer behaviour, divorce, and remarriage. News media headlines continually blare out national and international unrest and VIOLENCE OF ALL KINDS! And recent statistics show that murders have been increasing.

WHY do these appalling conditions exist today?

The BASIC CAUSE of this world’s problems and sorrows is LUST IN ACTION!

Everyone seeks true happiness. But each wants it THEIR OWN WAY. We want to follow the ways which SEEM right to US! By our carnal nature we don’t want to follow GOD’S WAYS which would automatically bring the really good things of life we all desire.

Human desire often IMPELS individuals and nations to “get” their desires one way or another! They even try to STEAL happiness — not realizing that it just cannot be done! They lie, cheat, rob and kill — all in

the vain pursuit of that elusive, intangible thing THEY call “happiness.” Consequently, improper human nature is on the rampage everywhere!

Did you ever stop to analyse the NATURE of the carnal mind — and exactly WHY it is the cause of this world’s problems?

How Our Minds Work

GOD set in motion an ability within the human mind which allows it to be HOSTILE and DISOBEDIENT to God.

We tend to call it HUMAN NATURE!

A human’s mind, with its tendency toward disobedience, is a “carnal” or fleshly mind. And the Bible says the “carnal mind is ENMITY against God” — for, by itself, it is often DISOBEDIENT to God’s laws (Romans 8:7).

Paul recognized this working within his OWN mind. Because he was still being drawn downward into disobedience on occasion, he cried out in exasperation, “I find then a law [of disobedience — human nature], that, when I would do good, evil is PRESENT with me ...” (Romans 7:21, KJV).

Paul went on to lament, “I see ... [this same] law [of disobedience] in my members [in my body], WARRING against the law of my mind [GOD’S LAW, which Paul had accepted in his heart and mind — verse 22], and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin [disobedience] which is in my members” (verse 23, KJV).

Let’s see this in a more recent rendering of those passages:

21 I have discovered this principle of life — that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. 22 I love God’s law with all my heart. 23 But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. (Romans 7:21- 23, NLT)

From Paul’s example we see there is a war constantly going on within a converted, SPIRIT — BEGOTTEN mind against the evil pulls of human nature. Even the Apostle Paul was having difficulty at times in keeping temptations from getting the better of him!

In this light, we can better understand the FALSE REASONING of Adam and Eve when they took of the tree which was a MIXTURE of good (obedience) AND evil (disobedience). Their carnal minds REASONED that this mixture of good AND evil wasn’t “too bad” after all. But it was this very MIXTURE which God CONDEMNED! They were COMPLETELY DISOBEDIENT in taking what God had specifically forbidden!

God longs for the time when the entire world will be able to receive His Holy Spirit — be SPIRITUALLY BEGOTTEN — so they can begin to OBEY His spiritual laws, be further blessed, and ultimately be born as His Spirit Children. He cried out, in His exasperation at the disobedience of Israel in Old Testament times:

29 Oh, that they had such a HEART [mind] in them that they would fear Me and ALWAYS keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! (Deuteronomy 5:29)

But you may ask, “Why didn’t God create us perfectly obedient to Him FROM THE START?”

Had God made us perfectly obedient from the beginning, we would have been mere AUTOMATONS

— as the moon which moves, but has NO MIND OF ITS OWN. We would not have been creatures of CHOICE. Right decisions would not be a matter of FREE VOLITION!

God commanded His people and all humankind:

31 Get yourselves a NEW heart and a NEW spirit. For why should you die? (Ezekiel 18:31)

Notice that God said, “Get you ...!” It is “you” whom God holds RESPONSIBLE! God created us and He has given each of us the POWER OF DECISION. The power to CHOOSE WHETHER or not we will repent of going the opposite of His commanded ways!

God shows that our own ways apart from Him bring only MISERY and DEATH upon us. He reveals that we must GIVE UP OUR FORMER WAYS and SURRENDER to His will and His ways before we can experience true happiness. It is only then that God is able to BEGIN His new spiritual creation within us — for it is then that He BEGETS US by His Holy Spirit, which begins to nourish our spiritual growth toward the perfection of God’s character.

But God’s Spirit will not drive us or FORCE US to do anything! We must FOLLOW His Spirit as it GUIDES US into new truth. And we must PUT TO USE THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH it gives us to overcome our human nature.

Yes, we must supply the HUMAN EFFORT to GO the way God’s Spirit will lead us — in OBEDIENCE TO GOD! This is what produces God’s CHARACTER in man — which is His glorious PURPOSE for human existence!

“Conscience” Not Always a Guide

The mind God gave humankind has something which we call “conscience.” It leads a person to do what he or she regards as right. This is the WAY which God refers to when He says:

12 There is a way that SEEMS RIGHT to a man, But its end is the way of DEATH. (Proverbs 14:12)

The carnal mind, therefore, follows a WAY OF LIFE which often tries to satisfy the human EGO. It follows the way which “SEEMS” right and DISOBEYS the spiritual law of God with which it is in often in DISAGREEMENT! (Romans 8:7).

What we need is a BETTER GUIDE for making our decisions than our carnal minds can provide — and MUCH, MUCH MORE POWER TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT!

God has provided this better guide through the BIBLE. Paul said, “I would not have known sin [disobedience], except through the LAW” — the commandments and precepts of God as revealed in the Scriptures (Romans 7:7).

The SCRIPTURES must be our guide to living!

And the SUPERNATURAL POWER of God’s HOLY SPIRIT — which He promises to place within us upon repentance and baptism — will ENABLE US to begin obeying His inspired Word!

But now notice what God says regarding HOW MANY are disobeying Him today and the condition of the world in general. God wants us to realize “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5:19, NKJV).

God also speaks of it as, “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4, NKJV) or “this present evil world” as the KJV put it. Both history and God’s Word show that the world has been evil FROM THE TIME ADAM AND EVE DISOBEYED GOD!

As Christians, we know that there is a better age to come (which will happen per Revelation 21:1-7). And that is something Paul’s statement in Galatians 1:4 also which implies.

Let us consider our world today in its true light. Let’s notice the REACTION of humanity’s natural “carnal mind” toward the commandments of God.

And let us notice the UNFAILING SORROW that invariably falls on people when they disobey God’s revealed commandments!

Disobedient Pulls of the Carnal Mind

God lists the DISOBEDIENT PULLS within our fleshly “carnal” minds — the pulls to which “This present EVIL world” has been succumbing. Let’s notice what they are.

1. Did God create things that were very good? Genesis 1:31.

COMMENT: The late Pastor-General of the old

Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

No Rebellion

Now what does this record of the creation of the first humans reveal as to Adam’s nature at the time of his creation? I repeat: Only the very most brief high spots are recorded here. The little that is revealed gives us, however, all we really need to know. Here it is: “And out of the ground the Eternal God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them ...” (Genesis 2:19). Here, in the briefest of summaries, we may see clearly whether this short account reveals a rebellious and disobedient nature in Adam, or one of compliance and obedience.

Absolutely NO REBELLION is indicated here. We find, instead, the response that Adam gave names to all cattle, to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field. This incident reveals Adam’s attitude and nature as he was created, PRIOR TO his temptation by Satan (which is recorded in chapter 3). Notice carefully. Absolutely NOTHING in the account of this pre-temptation incident indicates in Adam the presence of an evil, hostile, rebellious attitude or nature. It does not reflect a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, as human nature is described (Jeremiah 17:9), nor a carnal mind that is enmity (hostile) against God and which “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7).

Nor, on the other hand, does it reveal a nature filled with the Spirit of God.

Adam had not yet been confronted by Satan, had not disobeyed, nor had he taken of the “tree of life” to receive the indwelling LOVE and POWER of God’s Holy Spirit, which would have imparted the DIVINE NATURE (2 Peter 1:4).

So, prior to the temptation by Satan, we have only the revelation that Adam’s NATURE, as God created him, was not evil, hostile and diabolical. There may have been the physical and mental nature of self-preservation and such things. But

NOT the evil nature of SELF-centeredness.

We need to realize that God created Adam and the human race for a PURPOSE. We need to have clearly in mind, at this point, WHAT that purpose is. (Armstrong HW. Human Nature, Did God Create It? 1976)

Humans were not made inherently evil.

2. Did God make humans upright? Ecclesiastes 7:29.

COMMENT: God made humans upright. But humans have strayed.

3. The Bible often refers to the human heart as FIGURATIVELY REPRESENTING the basic motives and intentions of our carnal minds (Psalm 10:6, 11, 13). Does God say the heart can be deceitful and wicker? Jeremiah 17:9.

COMMENT: “Wicked” means SINFUL! And “sin is the TRANSGRESSION of the law” — GOD’S LAW (1 John 3:4, KJV).

4. Speaking in a broad sense, what are the evil characteristics of our desperately wicked carnal minds? — VARIANCE? EMULATIONS? SEDITIONS? HERESIES? Galatians 5:20, KJV.

COMMENT: “Variance” means to be “at odds,” or NOT IN AGREEMENT. God here points out that this pull of human nature can cause us to NOT agree with Him.

The word “emulations” means “desire of superiority,” or “envious rivalry.” This, as all other evil pulls, must be OVERCOME!

The word “seditions” refers to the STIRRING UP OF COMMOTIONS just short of treason. Treason is the outright attempt to overthrow government.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they allowed themselves to be influenced to do something that God taught against. Eve wanted to be wiser and listened to Satan. Adam did not want to be estranged from Eve, so he sinned and sin entered the world (Romans 5:12).

- 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.
- 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman

being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:12-15)

They were both influenced by Satan, but in different ways — Satan broadcast what he thought they each would respond to.

Three main factors that cause people to sin are Satan, society, and self. And both Eve and Adam had at least two of those each influence their decisions to disobey God.

Since Satan was mentioned first, a little about Satan should be reviewed.

First, the Bible is clear that Satan was the serpent of old:

9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:9)

2 ... the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan (Revelation 20:2)

So, Satan deceives the whole world and is the serpent of old — the one in the Garden of Eden. Satan was the deceptive serpent that Adam and Eve encountered.

Notice also the following:

42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. **43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.** **44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.** 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” (John 8:42-47)

We all have been deceived.

Yet, God allowed this and has also allowing humans to set up systems of government here on this earth that are NOT in accord with God's laws and the resulting government He will establish. He is letting humans see and EXPERIENCE for themselves where their carnal mind will LEAD them!

5. What are some of the other disobedient works of the flesh? Galatians 5:19-21. Does humankind's mind tend to worship FALSE GODS rather than the true God? Note the word "idolatry" in verse 20.

COMMENT: It will be very enlightening for you to look up, in your dictionary, the words used in Galatians 5:19-21 which label these disobedient pulls of the carnal human mind. Then you will see how these evil pulls EXTEND on over into many other fields of disobedience. You may list these in your notes, if you like.

We cannot, of ourselves, remove all these disobedient pulls of human nature. What God wants us to realize is that only with His HOLY SPIRIT can we be able to CONTROL them so our intentions and efforts can be directed towards obedience to God and love of our fellow humans.

6. Does God say there are yet OTHER disobedient pulls of similar nature within our minds? Galatians 5:21. Note the words "and THE LIKE."

COMMENT: It is interesting to note that NOWHERE in the Bible is there a description of any inherent "good" qualities of the NATURAL, CARNAL MIND of people.

What do these disobedient pulls, if UNRESISTED by one's will, do? Mark 7:20-23.

COMMENT: Yet, God has allowed this for a great and wonderful purpose. He expects us to learn to OVERCOME them by the POWER of His Holy Spirit!

God wants us to REPENT of having followed the dictates of our "desperately wicked" minds, and call upon Him to place His Spirit of love and power in us so we can PUT DOWN and CONTROL the evil pulls of the flesh.

God wants us to rise up above our natures and

DEVELOP His righteous, holy, spiritual character!

Various Disobedient Pulls

1. Will anyone be born into God's Kingdom if he hasn't received the Holy Spirit, and overcome the DEFILING downward pulls of the flesh? Revelation 21:27 and Galatians 5:19-21.
2. Have all sinned? Romans 3:10, 23. What does God repeat, for emphasis, in verse 12?

COMMENT: NO ONE IS, or ever has been, COMPLETELY OBEDIENT to God — EXCEPT JESUS the CHRIST!

3. Does another disobedient pull lead some to swiftly shed blood? Romans 3:15.
4. What does God point out will happen to those who do not REPENT, and RESIST — through the power of the Holy Spirit — the way which "seems right to a man" — the way humans have REASONED out as being right by their OWN standards which satisfies the evil pulls of the flesh? Romans 3:16-18.

COMMENT: The carnal mind likes to REASON AROUND and COMPROMISE. But God wants no compromises from us. He wants COMPLETE obedience — so we can be COMPLETELY happy!

We are to have a complete and permanent DISTRUST of our "DECEITFUL" minds (Jeremiah 17:9) when there is a clash between "what we think is right" and what GOD commands! The apostle Paul realized he could not depend on his human mind. He realized he needed GOD'S MIND and GOD'S COMMANDMENTS to guide him!

5. Did Adam and Eve give in to their desires even though God was WITH them in the Garden of Eden? Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:6.

COMMENT: The example of Adam and Eve helps show that Christ will have to come with great power and display of might before people really begin to FEAR God!

6. Adam and Eve were CLOSE to God in the Garden of Eden. They KNEW God. Did people, from the very beginning, even though they KNEW God, become VAIN because of the lusts within them? Romans 1:21, KJV. Look up the

word “vain” in your dictionary — it will give a list of other downward desires in defining this word. Write down a representative number of them in your notebook.

COMMENT: Here we see that PRIDE is another pull of man’s nature. God shows the world became futile, or empty in its thinking and PROUD of its trifling accomplishments.

Pride comes to the surface and influences man to ACT proudly. This the first of many wrong pulls we will see in ACTION in Adam and Eve and also in this “this present EVIL age”:

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. (Genesis 3:1-7)

Adam and Eve disobeyed God. One tree looked good to Eve. In other words, through their pride they took to themselves the knowledge of what is good and what is evil. They decided for themselves what is the way to go — what is the right way to live. Humanity has fallen into that way ever since.

As Genesis 2:9 mentioned, there was another tree in the Garden of Eden — the tree of life. But Adam and Eve had not chosen to eat of that. Now God

had told them about the way to live. The way of the tree of life — reliance on the Spirit of God that will give us spiritual knowledge so we can solve spiritual problems and troubles and evils. But they rejected that — they rejected truly doing things God’s way. That is why humans ever since have been unable to solve their problems.

And after they sinned, God decided that they could not have access to that other tree:

22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24)

There were two trees. One that appealed to pride and lust, the other that must have had less appeal to Adam and Eve. Since it would not be good for the prideful to live forever, God cut them off from eternal life at that time.

Do our carnal minds have a natural pull to REALLY honor and glorify God as the Creator who made and sustains this earth and gives us the air we breathe, and be THANKFUL to Him for them? Romans 1:21.

COMMENT: God reveals it is absolutely UN-NATURAL for our carnal minds to glorify and give thanks to Him!

Now you are beginning to understand YOURSELF, and all other human beings, as we REALLY ARE!

Our Minds Can Work Against Us

1. Do people deceive themselves into believing they’re wiser than they really are? Romans 1:22. What does God call those who trust in their OWN deceitful minds? Proverbs 28:26. Also notice Isaiah 5:21.

COMMENT: God says that all who place complete reliance on their understanding of their own minds — “thinking they know it all,” instead of relying on His Word — are headed for real trouble! God should know — He MADE our minds!

There is a human paradox. Humans are given choices and will not always make the right ones, because of influences of Satan, society, and their own self. But God made humans to have potential to rule the universe (Hebrews 2:5-8).

2. Did the disobedient pull to worship idols (Galatians 5:20) quickly make itself evident in VISIBLE ACTION? Romans 1:23, 25.

COMMENT: Instead of worshipping the true God whom they actually KNEW, the people began to make literal IDOLS which they worshipped!

An idol can be anything visible or invisible which is PUT AHEAD OF, or in place of, GOD and His COMMANDMENTS. It can be a car, accumulation of wealth, a mate, children — anything which turns us AWAY from God.

3. Has God really tried to change the vast majority of the people, or is He now letting them see where their own ways LEAD — is He letting them experience the fruits of the “way which SEEMS right” to men? Romans 1:24, 26, 28.

COMMENT: Because of people rejecting God’s (Romans 1:18-21) truth (and not just Adam and Eve), the Bible has the phrases, “Professing to be wise, they became fools ... God ... gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their HEARTS” — to their disobedient pulls. And, “GOD gave them up to vile passions” (Romans 1:22,24,26). And, “GOD gave them over to a reprobate mind” — to reprobate, disobedient pulls. (Romans 1:26, KJV)

God has NOT YET tried to change the majority of the people of this world. But when God DOES, HE WILL SUCCEED! For nearly 6,000 years God has been allowing humans to learn, through the “school of hard knocks,” exactly where their OWN WAYS — apart from God’s ways — will lead them.

4. Did the adulterous and fornicating pulls in man (Mark 7:21), and even similar worse disobedient pulls, quickly show up in man’s actions? Romans 1:26-27. Did they suffer PENALTIES for committing these sins? Last part of verse 27.
5. What is another long list of disobedient pulls

that God says we are filled with — pulls which show up in our actions if we are unwilling to repent and receive God’s Holy Spirit to help us overcome them? Romans 1:29-31.

COMMENT: Overall, carnal nature has not CHANGED — nor does it really WANT to change. That is why God labels our time “This PRESENT EVIL age”! (Galatians 1:4).

Notice that even children’s disobedience to parents results from disobedient pulls in their minds! God wants GOVERNMENT taught and exercised in the home (Ephesians 6:1-4). He wants children to be TAUGHT to live in harmony with their parents and surroundings.

6. What are those who give way to disobedient desires or even approve them worthy of? Romans 1:32. What do people experience as a RESULT of following the dictates of their carnal minds? Romans 3:16.

COMMENT: God is allowing humanity to learn how WRETCHED their ways of living really are in comparison to God’s ways of happiness and abundant living.

Attitude Toward the World

The things you have learned in this lesson so far may have come as a SHOCK to you. THEY SHOULD if you had not learned of them before. Now let’s learn more about the nature of our carnal minds.

You may have often heard it said that this is “God’s world.” People thus infer that everything here is “sweetness and light” etc., etc. And subconsciously you have BELIEVED it.

This is the Devil’s talk!

During this age, this is the Devil’s world — he is the “prince” of it (John 14:30) and its “god” (2 Corinthians 4:4). And he wants to keep the world’s carnal-minded people — his subjects — satisfied with it!

You may have also heard the slogan, “TRUST your fellowman.” And you have also heard someone say with great DISGUST, when this slogan was not lived up to, “What’s the matter, don’t YOU TRUST me?” Perhaps you have been inclined to accept this slogan too — although wondering about it somewhat.

Now that you understand how the UNCONVERTED — the UNCHANGED by the HOLY SPIRIT — minds of people WORK, you can come to realize why God wants you to REPENT NOW and SEPARATE YOURSELF (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) from many of the customs of “this present EVIL world.” (Galatians 1:4, KJV).

You will realize that it requires the very Spirit of God Himself to help obey His Word — the BIBLE (John 14:15-26; Acts 5:32; John 14:23) — SO YOU may be counted worthy to escape all the terrible things (Luke 21:36) shortly to fall on “this present EVIL age,” and be qualified to assist Christ in aiding others into coming to repentance and qualifying to be born INTO the Kingdom of God! (Matthew 24:13; Isaiah 30:20; Revelation 1:6, Acts 2:38; John 3:5-6) This, then, is WHY we MUST see just how evil today’s world really is!

The New Testament teaches that Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV).

Remember that for this to be a GOOD world in God’s sight, everyone would have to be OBEYING GOD’S COMMANDMENTS — NOT in part, but COMPLETELY. That is what everyone who is born into God’s Kingdom will ultimately be doing. That is God’s standard. THAT IS GOD’S GOAL FOR HUMANKIND!

What is the mystery of God’s plan? Why did God create anything?

The vast majority of humans do not know!

God created what He did so eternity would be better (cf. Hebrews 6:9, 11:16; Philippians 1:23)

The Bible reveals that God made humanity to reproduce Himself (Malachi 2:15) and be part of His family (Ephesians 3:14-19).

He made us to share in His glory (Romans 8:17) and to rule the universe (Hebrews 2:5-17). Jesus taught that, “It is more blessed to give than receive” (Acts 20:35). God MADE humanity in order to give love (cf. 1 John 4:7-12) and so that there would be more love in the universe (cf. Matthew 22:37-39). That is the meaning of life.

Your individual purpose, presuming you accept God’s way, is to give love in a unique manner in order to make eternity better for yourself and everyone else!

That will happen after the first resurrection for true Christians and after the third resurrection for others who will accept God and His ways.

Currently, we see an age where Satan influences people to turn away from the ways of God.

The Unconverted Mind in Action

1. If there is a CONFLICT between the laws of God and the laws of humans, WHOM does God say we are to obey? Acts 5:29. Did Christ verify this? Matthew 4:10. Note the word ONLY.
2. Has God made humans subject futility (NKJV) or vanity (KJV)? Romans 8:20. Why? Romans 8:20-21. Will this work out for good for those God calls? Romans 8:28.

COMMENT: There is a purpose. God allowed us to have carnal minds. It is part of His plan. A plan that works for the good of those who truly love Him and respond to His calling.

Let’s see if this current age is under GOD’S government — that is, if it is obeying HIS COMMANDMENTS or truly listening to His word.

3. What is God’s command concerning KILLING? Exodus 20:13. Is this world obeying it? Aren’t people WARRING and KILLING around the world? Then this world is NOT obeying this part of God’s great Ten Commandments, is it?
4. Haven’t we just learned that the disobedient pull to murder, war and kill — which must be PUT DOWN and CONTROLLED through the POWER of the Holy Spirit — is a part of the lusts of a carnal mind? James 4:1-2.
5. Did God inspire Paul to REPEAT His commandment not to kill, so there would be no doubt that it is a commandment for us TODAY? Romans 13:9.
6. What lusts lead many to BELIEVE that mass war — killings are “justifiable”? Mark 7:21; Galatians 5:21 and Romans 3:15.

COMMENT: This lustful TENDENCY makes it much easier for people to especially justify killing in warfare.

7. Do this world's churches, whose leaders are also drawn by this downward pull, SANCTION warfare?

COMMENT: It is well known that the churches of this world, by their very words and ACTIONS, do sanction warfare — FOR THEIR MEMBERS GO TO WAR! Often, they have encouraged them to do so. Humanity's carnal mind reasons that to "EXPEDITE PEACE," it is right to kill.

This world has yet to attain mastery over its lusts! The vast majority will finally learn the "hard way" that their religious leaders do not know how to bring real peace and happiness. Most endorse warfare.

8. Is the good news that true ministers are to proclaim ever called the "gospel of peace"? Romans 10:15, Ephesians 6:15.

COMMENT: Those who have studied early Christianity realize that early Christians refused to participate in carnal warfare. And while true Christians still maintain the position held by the New Testament Church, many who profess Christ accept the heretical view that they can participate in carnal warfare.

Most who call themselves "Christian" also do not realize that they accepted carnal warfare because of the actions and beliefs of the sun-worshiping Emperor Constantine.

The Church of Rome originally did not accept military participation by its members, nor did those truly in the early Church of God.

Rome really adopted the acceptance of military service once it had a benefactor known as Emperor Constantine. Notice the accounts from two historians:

The Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312 A.D.) ... Constantine ... the ... cross. He had been led to adopt this emblem through the appearance, as once he prayed to the sun-god, of a cross over the setting sun, with the inscription upon it, in this sign conquer. Obedient unto the celestial vision, Constantine had at once made the cross his banner, and it was beneath this new emblem that his soldiers marched to victory at the battle of the Milvian Bridge.

Whatever may have been the circumstances

or the motives which led Constantine to make the cross his standard, this act of his constitutes a turning point in the history of the Christian Church. Christianity had come into the world as a religion of peace and good will. The Master had commanded his disciples to put up the sword. For two centuries and more, obedience to this command by a large body of his followers had been so implicit that a Quaker, nonmilitary spirit had throughout this period characterized the new sect. Some of the early Church Fathers taught that the profession of arms was incompatible with a true Christian life. But after the victory for the Cross at the Milvian Bridge a change passed over the Church. It leaned more and more upon earthly power, and became militant. This infusion into the Church of the military spirit of Rome was one of the most important consequences of the story of the miraculous cross in the sky, and of the espousal of the Christian cause by the emperor Constantine. (Van Ness Myers, Philip. Ancient History. Published by Ginn and company, 1916 Original from the New York Public Library Digitized Sep 26, 2007pp. 480-481).

{Constantine} described to them the figure of the sign he had seen, bidding them represent it in gold and precious stones ... Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a transverse bar laid over it. On the top of the whole was fixed a wreath of gold and precious stones; and within this, the symbol of the Saviour's name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its centre ... The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies (Eusebius. The Life of Constantine, Chapter 31).

So, in other words, like the Quakers and the Continuing Church of God, those who considered themselves Christians were opposed to military participation until a sun-worshiping emperor claimed to see a spear in the sky with a cross bar. Then he and his immediately "Christian" soldiers used this as their emblem when

they went and killed. So, this is how participation in carnal military warfare supposedly became “acceptable.” Do Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox realize that this is the real reason that “Christians” decided that they could bear arms for carnal governments?

Falsely called “Christians” accepted participation in carnal warfare because of Emperor Constantine. And though they may come up with many other reasons to justify it, historically it was Constantine that got many who professed Christ to decide that Christian warfare could be carnal in this age.

Furthermore, the acceptance of carnal warfare has caused the true Christian faith to be blasphemed (cf. 2 Peter 2:1-2).

Wars come from covetousness (James 4:1-2). The historically proper Church of God (COG) position is that true Christians refrain from military service whenever possible, and never engage in carnal warfare in this age (John 18:36).

Sadly, many who claim Christianity have not understood various important aspects of the “gospel of peace.”

9. Since people do not keep God’s commandments, whose commandments do they often keep? Matthew 15:9. Who has influenced them? John 8:44.

COMMENT: Humans, influenced by the devil, normally follow their own heart, or mind which leads them to accept lies.

10. Since most ministers of this world do not really represent God, whom do they represent? 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.
11. Will people fall for signs and lying wonders? 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10a.
12. Why? 2 Thessalonians 2:10b-12.
13. Do the carnal-natured seem to love these counterfeit IDOLATROUS ways which lead to death? John 3:19, Psalm 135:15-18; Jeremiah 11:12.
14. Will the man of sin and his assistant get Christians killed in the end time? Daniel 7:25,

Revelation 13:7,15.

15. Will these same leaders be involved to get people to WAR against Christ when He returns? Revelation 16:13-14, 16.

16. Doesn’t God plainly reveal that we bring great anguish UPON OURSELVES if we disobey His commandments against killing? Revelation 13:10.

Greed

God shows that there are other ways in which man “wars” against his fellowman. This “present EVIL world” is WORSE than cannibalistic — it eats upon ITSELF! Man’s greed in desiring and taking the POSSESSIONS of his fellowman is now threatening COSMOCIDE — SUICIDE of the human race!

1. Does God command us not to even let the THOUGHT of taking what is not rightfully ours enter our mind? Exodus 20:17. Isn’t this one of God’s great Ten COMMANDMENTS? What should those who stole do? Ephesians 5:28.

COMMENT: Not only are we not to steal (Exodus 20:15) or even want to (Exodus 20:17), we are to work, be productive, and be givers (cf. Ephesians 5:28).

2. How does God sum up the way we should treat our fellow humans? James 2:8, 10. Do carnal-minded have a problem with God’s ways? Romans 8:7. Note the word “law” — God’s law!

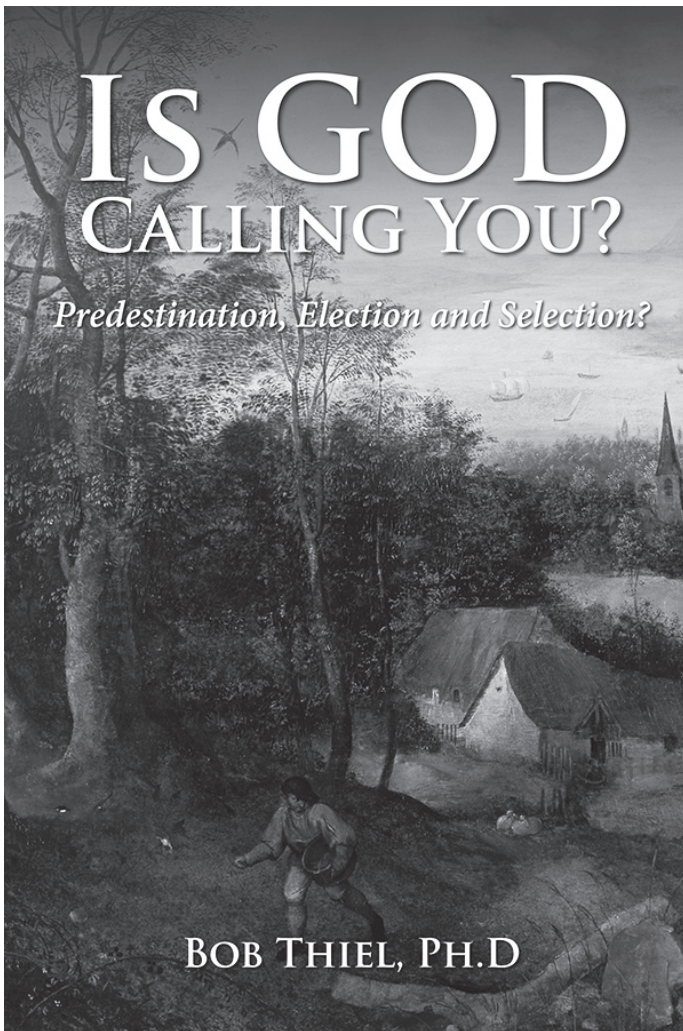
COMMENT: All the laws God has ever given to humans for right living are based upon the Ten Commandments. And all the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one-word LOVE — the “Royal Law” of LOVE!

Jesus divided God’s law of love into two parts — LOVE toward God and LOVE toward fellow humans (Matthew 22:36-40). Love, therefore, is the SUMMATION of the WHOLE LAW — “the ROYAL LAW” (James 2:8,10).

You love your fellow humans by TREATING THEM JUST AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED!

(This lesson is expected to be continued in the next edition of this magazine.)

Is God Calling You?



By Bob Thiel

Could God be calling you?

Right now, God IS calling a people out of this sin — sick and dying world. It is a wonderful calling for a fantastic purpose. It is so awe — inspiring that many have difficulty believing it. Perhaps YOU are being called right now. You need to know, lest you ignore a real call from the great God of all the universe. Read this booklet to find out whether God is calling YOU!

A common idea of today's Greco-Roman-Protestant world is that a battle is taking place between God and Satan. The idea teaches that God is trying to get everyone saved, and Satan is trying to get everyone lost. If that be true, then every honest person would have to admit GOD IS LOSING, because even the total

of ALL the “nominal Christians” in the world have always been a minority on this earth.

Nowadays, the vast majority of all people do not even profess Christianity.

Yet, as far as salvation goes, your Bible says there is only one name under heaven by which we can be saved:

10 let it be known to you all, ... the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:10-12, NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted)

Billions of people have lived and died without ever hearing the name of Jesus Christ, let alone the real truths of the Bible. What about those people?

What about little babies that live only a few hours? Has God caused them to be doomed? Are they lost forever?

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

EVERYONE will have a chance!

And it is more than some random chance — all will have a real opportunity for salvation.

Specific Calling Necessary

The shocking fact is, God is not trying to get everyone saved now!

It is a lack of understanding of God's plan that causes Protestant evangelists to shout in this age: “Give your heart to the Lord before it's too late!”

The inspired Word of God reveals that NO ONE can come to Jesus Christ UNLESS THE FATHER SPECIFICALLY CALLS HIM:

44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

Similarly in John 6:65, Jesus taught:

65 “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

God the Father must call for any to come to Jesus. But God has not called all now.

In other words, God must call one to be saved in this age.

Jesus explained to His intimate followers that they had been called. He said:

19 “... I chose you out of the world.” (John 15:19)

The Bible is filled with positive PROOF that all Christians must receive a divine call from God. And there is a much more positive story. The plain truth is that God is not trying to save the whole world now, but has a plan for all.

Another truth to grasp is that if God is calling you, while that includes your salvation (Philippians 2:12), you are called for more than just your own salvation.

And those who are called are called to a calling, and what is it?

First, a calling to a changed life — a life of overcoming sin and self, growing in grace and in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), building character while enduring to the end for salvation (Matthew 10:22). God sent His son Jesus (John 3:16-17) so you can have a new life in Christ (Romans 6:4,23).

Christians are to be a NEW creation:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You have sinned. Yet, no matter what you did, you can be forgiven and given a fresh start in life in the truth with God:

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:6-10)

How valuable is your calling to the Kingdom of God? Jesus told the following parable:

44 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44- 46)

The Christian calling is the pearl of great price.

It provides hope to those who would not have otherwise had it:

12 ... at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:12-13)

Furthermore, it is a calling to support the work (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

The great purpose of being called now is to be trained to rule with Christ, and to teach, under Him, when He comes in His Kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6) — and when all Israel shall be saved (cf. Romans 11). We are being trained, prepared, fitted, through trial and test, through hardship, through persecution, through tribulation, with continual Bible study and prayer, growing in grace and in knowledge, to be able, then, to fill the high office of a king and/or a priest (Revelation 1:6; 5:10) — either to rule in the civil sense, or to preach God’s truth when the time comes that all may be privileged to understand, and to be called. Furthermore, we are to make eternity better for ourselves and all others who will one day accept

the call.

What a glorious mission is the true Christian life! The elect have the opportunity to support God's loving plan now! The uncalled do not.

When asked why He spoke in parables, Jesus said to His disciples:

11 "... it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." (Matthew 13:11)

This statement by Jesus goes against the common misconception ('fake news') that He spoke in parables so that more would understand. Most were not to understand in this age:

7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (Romans 11:7)

Only the elect can attain salvation in this age, the rest have been blinded. Jesus said that blindness is to be excused (John 15:22).

Paul in Romans 11 shows that salvation has come to the few, the elect in Israel, and to some of the Gentiles. And why? He explains it in verses 31-32:

31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. (Romans 11:31-32)

Most people are blinded, now, that through mercy shown to those who are now called they may obtain mercy and salvation after Jesus comes as the great Deliverer. How plain, and how wonderful!

Now, it should be pointed out that more Gentiles are to be called before Jesus returns.

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (Romans 11:25)

The late Pastor General of the old Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong, wrote the following about Romans 11:25:

Now study carefully beginning verse 25: "Blindness in part is happened to Israel [HOW LONG? Forever? No — note it], UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" — the end of this age during which God is calling a people from among the gentiles to bear His name (Acts 15:14). And so, says Romans 11:26, "all Israel SHALL BE SAVED [how?]: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." The Deliverer, Jesus Christ, is coming again! ...

Notice verse 31. These blinded Israelites have not now, in this age, received mercy, that through the mercy of the gentiles saved in this age, they MAY, THEN, obtain mercy and salvation. How? Because these saved gentiles will then be kings and priests, assisting in this wonderful Work! (Armstrong HW. Where Will The MILLENNIUM Be Spent? Tomorrow's Word magazine, September 1971)

Clearly, we are much closer to the time when all the Gentiles are to come in to later be kings and priests! More of the Gentiles had to be called — and that is happening in the Continuing Church of God.

The end does NOT come until the 'Gospel of the Kingdom of God' reaches enough nations (Matthew 24:14) and "the full number" (as the NIV, NLT, BSB, CEV, GNT, HCSV, ISV, and NET Bible, put Romans 11:25) of Gentiles God wants in this age come in.

And for those who do what Jesus wants, including Gentiles, scripture teaches:

26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. 27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron ... (Revelation 2:26-27)

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. 15 Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, testifying that we are the children of God. 17 Now if we are children, we are also heirs — truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if indeed we suffer together with Him,

so that we may also be glorified together with Him. (Romans 8:14-17, AFV)

Christians called in this age are to become joint heirs with Jesus in the Kingdom of God!

Predestination & Election

Were YOU predestined to be called?

Perhaps.

Does this mean that your ultimate fate was decided for you in advance?

No.

Very few understand what “predestination” is.

First, consider what it is not. There is no teaching in the Bible that says the decision you are to make — your final fate of becoming either saved or lost — is already pre-determined, and that you are destined finally to arrive at that fate.

Predestination is not about being predestined to be lost.

But doesn't the Bible say anything about predestination?

Certainly.

But it does not say what people seem to think. People seem to think it says we are predestined to be either saved or lost. Some to be saved — others to be lost.

Let's look at where the Bible mentions predestination directly.

The Apostle Paul taught:

4 ... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (Ephesians 1:4-5).

While some are predestined to be called in this age, most of humanity has NOT been predestined to be lost.

Notice also:

11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:11-12)

Christians were predestined to be called, but must choose whether or not to be faithful. You do have a choice—a choice to be part of the elect or a choice not to be.

Those predestined are predestined, not to be lost, but to be the praise of His glory.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

Again, predestination has to do with being predestined to be a child of God. None of the places in the Bible where predestination is mentioned does it say anything about anyone being predestined to be LOST — predestined to reject Christ. No one is predestined to make a certain decision — to accept or reject Christ — to be saved or lost. But some have been predestined to be called to salvation, now!

If you have been predestined, your “selection” and election was by God:

1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James, to those of God's selection who have been made holy by God the Father and are kept safe for Jesus Christ: (Jude 1:1, BBE)

1 ... Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ... 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. (1 Thessalonians 1:1,4)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the ... 2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus

Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

God's beloved are called to be holy, obedient, and kept safe for Jesus.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Don't misunderstand — God's grace is free and unmerited, but if we refuse to change our lives — to obey God — He is under no obligation to bestow His grace upon us.

God's Spirit gives us the power we need to develop character. But we must work at it.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

God will not allow Christ's sacrifice and His grace to be taken lightly.

At least partially because of this, Luke 12:32 shows that the number of the faithful, until God's kingdom is given, will be small:

32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Notice that only a few will find Christ now, as in Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus teaches:

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.

This is the same Jesus who came to save more than a few (Luke 13:29-30).

Paul shows that while God has not cast away His people forever, He only has called a remnant now —

and this election is because of grace:

1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! ... 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:1,5)

Zechariah 10:6 shows:

6 "I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, Because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside;

How can people be as though they were not cast aside if they will not have an opportunity for salvation?

But not all have an opportunity in this age, the church age.

There is no partiality with God:

11 For there is no partiality with God. (Romans 2:11)

9 ... there is no partiality with Him. (Ephesians 6:9)

34 In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. (Acts 10:34)

Hence, there must be a plan for the rest. A plan for those NOT called and chosen in this age as God is NOT partial, nor does He love them any less. They are not being called and chosen in this age to reduce the chance they will blaspheme the Holy Spirit and commit the unpardonable sin (Mark 3:29). Yet, they will have their opportunity in the age to come (Matthew 11:22-24; 12:32).

The firstfruits are called now, they are part of an earlier rain, but a latter rain will come per Hosea 6:3:

3 Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth.

This rain that will come in the future represents a harvest according to James 5:7:

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Those not called now will be called later. More on those to be called later, including hundreds of scriptures, is in the free online book: Universal Offer of Salvation: How can God save the lost?

When We Were Called

Of those called now, in this age, notice when we were called!

8 ... God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began; (2 Timothy 1:8-9)

God had a plan for YOU, if you are being called, BEFORE TIME BEGAN!

And, as in Ephesians 1, quoted earlier, notice carefully what it says: God chose us in Him, when? “Before the foundation of the world”! “Having predestined us” — what for? To be lost?

No, “to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself” “being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Were any predestined, then, to be lost? Is it God’s will that any be lost?

No (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

So, can we see that “predestination” has nothing to do with whether we shall be lost or saved — with our decision — with our ultimate fate?

Notice carefully, now! Being predestined “that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12).

Those predestined are the first to trust in Christ — merely the first preliminary harvest. And now do you begin to see the glorious truth — that predestination has nothing to do with your making a decision or your fate — it has only to do with the time of your calling — whether you are called now, in this age, or called later.

Notice it in the passage in Romans 8:28-30 (KJV): “For whom he did foreknow” How great is God! If you are one now called, God “foreknew” you. And “whom

he did foreknow, he also did predestine” — to be lost?

No, “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called” (Romans 8:29-30, KJV).

Not will call them in the future — called, now, in this age.

There it is. Note it. “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called” (Romans 8:30).

Predestination has to do with being called. Not with being saved or lost. Those now being called, in this age, were foreknown, and PRE-destined to be called now — to be the first to put their hope in Christ. To be deified and glorified with Him (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 3:14-19), when Christians are changed at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

All others have their call later.

God does not decide for you, in advance, whether you shall be saved or lost. He did decide far in advance which ones He would call in this first calling, to be a priest or a king in His Kingdom — to have part in the saving of others. How wonderful are God’s ways, when He opens our understanding to reveal them to us. Let us make our calling and final election sure.

Many Do Not Understand

THE very fact of wartime casualties, deaths of children, and accidental deaths has caused a great deal of added sorrow and grief that is entirely unnecessary — if we understand God’s plan! Many have grieved in the belief that loved ones died eternally “lost” — when, if they understood the truth, these probably were not lost at all.

But all this perplexity and worry has arisen from another general assumption — one of the greatest errors of this time, yet almost universally taken for granted without so much as a thought to inquire into it. That is the assumption that there are only two classes, living or dead — the saved, and the lost. You probably heard the theory “there is no middle ground. If you die right now, either you are saved, or you’re a permanently lost soul!”

This teaching has led to untold suffering and

unnecessary grief.

Many are grieving over departed loved ones who had never made a profession of Christ. Perhaps over one who really lived wickedly; perhaps over one who lived a “good” life in the worldly sense, but still had never accepted Christ or been converted.

Still others grieve because of a doubt — they are not sure whether some loved one died saved.

Supposing this universal assumption were true of those two classes, see where it leads us. This teaching comes from the supposition, also generally taken for granted without question, that this is the one and only age and time when God is trying desperately to save the world — that the mission of the Church is to save the world — that this is the only day of salvation, and it is now about over.

This IS NOT THE ONLY DAY OF SALVATION!! This is an absolute fact of your Bible.

But you may be thinking, doesn't the Bible teach that this is the only day of salvation?

No.

There are two verses that people sometimes point to related to that. However, both verses, when literally translated do not teach that. They teach about a, not the only, day of salvation.

8 Thus saith the Lord, In time an acceptable have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: (Isaiah 49:8, ITB)

2 for He says, “In an acceptable time I heard you, and in a day of salvation I helped you, behold, now [is] a well — accepted time; behold, now, a day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2, LSV)

Now, the passages shown above are literal as the Interlinear Transliterated Bible and Literal Standard Version show. Consider also that since the Greek language uses the definite article “the” much more than the English language does, it is noteworthy that the term “the” was not associated with any “day of salvation” in the New Testament.

Now, is AN accepted time, and now can be a/the day of salvation for those that have been called.

Ultimately, God will offer salvation to each and every

person who has ever lived. Part of His plan includes the first resurrection which is for those called, chosen and faithful in this age.

All those who are not now called, or given a chance for salvation, which are the billions who have lived and died from Adam until the close of this age, will come up in the second resurrection (Revelation 20:5). They will come up as physical human beings and be judged. Then they will be given their one and only true chance for salvation. This resurrection takes place one thousand years after the first one, after what tends to be called “the millennium.” In the millennium God will call everybody then living.

Notice what the Bible teaches:

14 I will again do a marvelous work among this people ...24 These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, And those who complained will learn doctrine. (Isaiah 29:14,24)

Most professing Christians are in ignorance of this basic truth. Essentially, this is because of non — biblical traditions often being taught as Christian doctrine.

The Bible teaches that Satan “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9) and that he “is a liar” and the father of lies (John 8:44).

You may be pleased to realize that God says He still has a plan for those misled by Satan — influenced human tradition in this age:

19 O Lord, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, “Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things.” 20 Will a man make gods for himself, Which are not gods? 21 “Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the Lord. (Jeremiah 16:19-21)

All were not expected to know the truth in this age, and many have inherited lies. But as both Isaiah and Jeremiah wrote, they will have their opportunity.

Let us not grieve over departed loved ones who probably were not called, in this life. God is able to raise them up again. The chances are they were simply not

then called — it was not given to them to understand — their chance had not yet come. But they shall be resurrected, their spiritual blindness removed. In the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-12; Isaiah 65:20), if you are one of the called, and if you are faithful and finally chosen, you may be used then to minister to them, and to lead them into salvation and life eternal.

During this age now, judgment is upon the true Church of God — those now called (1 Peter 4:17). Yet, we are later to judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2) as well as arise in the first resurrection!

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4- 6).

Oh, what a glorious hope! Those called now are blessed and holy if they will remain truly faithful. What truly good news, is the true gospel of the kingdom, which most people today simply have never heard or properly understood.

Therefore, the “classes” are not the saved or unsaved, the “classes” are basically the called and uncalled.

There is no injustice with God (cf. Genesis 18:25; Galatians 6:7).

He wants all to be saved:

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

He denies no one an opportunity of salvation.

The majority of humans are simply not called now — at this time — in this, Satan’s age. This is simply not

the time when God is trying to save everyone. If He were, then Satan surely would seem to be getting the better of the contest.

The old Worldwide Church of God published the following:

The apostle Peter wrote that real Christians should have “your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation [when God calls them]” (1 Peter 2:12).

There is, therefore, a heavy responsibility on those whom God has called out of the unreal world to maintain their standards ... at all times. (GN Focus: Unreal! Good News, September 1984)

If you are being called now, your life (cf. Matthew 5:16) should be a witness to others you come in contact with. This witness will begin in this life and will be remembered in the age to come. During that age to come, those not called now will be resurrected — when they have their “visitation.” Therefore, hopefully, your example should encourage them to be converted. Your calling has many purposes!

Now, did Jesus say the purpose of preaching the gospel was to CONVERT all nations?

No, it was to be preached as a witness:

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

After the end comes (Daniel 11:44) and the seventh trump sounds, the new age when the reign of Christ shall replace that of Satan will come.

While, during the present age, many in number are called, yet that number is a minority.

More on those to be called later, including hundreds of scriptures, is in the free online book, available at ccog.org: Universal Offer of Salvation: How can God save the lost?

More on God’s calling can be found in the free booklet, also online at ccog.org: *Is God Calling You?*

The Miracles of Jesus - Part 4

Feeding of 5,000 men



By S. Perry, Illustrations by C. Parr

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!

Here is what Matthew's account teaches about this:

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. (Matthew 14:14-21)

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

Further Learning

The disciples had witnessed many healings and miracles, but they seemed surprised that Jesus would 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 17:15-16, 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. "So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. 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 6:31-33. "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you".

The numbers in this miracle also add deeper meaning to this story.

The number five can represent the WORD of God. The books of the Law called the Pentateuch, which are the first five books of the Old Testament. Jesus was performing a miracle, feeding their hungry physical bodies, but one reason that He came to the earth, in doing His father's will, was to bring Spiritual food — the teaching of the perfect Law of Love and the coming Kingdom.

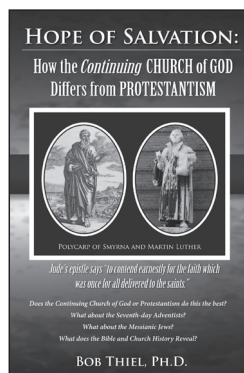
The number two can be a symbol of the two houses; of Judah and Ephraim. Jesus came to the lost house of Israel. Both to the Jews and the lost tribes scattered among Gentile nations. There are two sticks that will become one in the hand of The Eternal, with one shepherd and one king to rule over them (Ezekiel 37 15-25). Two also is a symbol of unity in a marriage, and of the God head — Father and Son.

Finally, the food was left in 12 baskets. There are 12 apostles; there are 12 tribes. 12 is a sign of His perfect government.

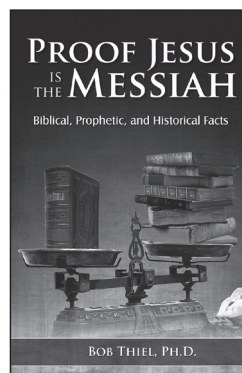
The food of the WORD of the Law of Love, the message of the coming kingdom, the Son of the Living God come to earth — this message and truth would go out to all the lost tribes, all the people scattered among the nations. All that Jesus did would not be forgotten; it would not die with Him.

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

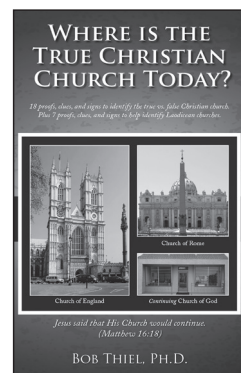
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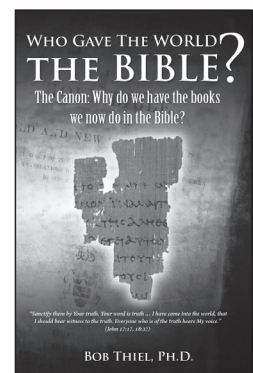
Hope of Salvation



Proof Jesus is the Messiah



Where is the True Christian Church Today?



Who Gave the World the BIBLE



Q. What is the *Continuing Church of God's* position on vaccines?

A. Jesus said Christians should not live in fear (cf. Luke 12:32), but look forward to His return and the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

The Bible teaches that all people should try to live healthy lives (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 3 John 2) and should strive to eat what is good (Isaiah 55:2). All people should practice proper sanitation (Deuteronomy 23:12). All human should strive to avoid sin (e.g., Romans 6:12; Ephesians 4:26).

Because of disobedience and other factors, many diseases afflict people (cf. Deuteronomy 28:58-61). Furthermore, scientists have produced various strains of difficult to treat infectious agents — which is something that should not have been done.

Instead of sufficiently striving to live according to God's ways, society has developed modern medicine, genetically — modified organisms, and vaccines. Most of which have sometimes had undesirable consequences.

Vaccines, of themselves, are not bad. Some aspects of modern medicine can be good. Vaccines have helped prevent some diseases (like Yellow Fever) that even proper sanitary practices do not prevent. However, vaccines do not react the same in all people and some people have serious, and in rare instances fatal, reactions to them. Vaccines do not benefit every

individual.

Various court decisions in the United States have upheld the rights of individuals seeking exemptions from immunizations/inoculations/vaccinations based upon "personal" religious beliefs (e.g. Sherr and Levy vs. Northport East — Northport Union Free School District, 672 F. Supp. 81, (E.D.N.Y., 1987); (Allanson vs. Clinton Central School District, U.S. District Court, Northern District Court, Northern District of New York (84 CV 174), 1984; Campain vs. Marlboro Central School District, Supreme Court Ulster County Special Term, November 15, 1985; Brown vs. City School District, 429 NYS2d 355; Maier vs. Betat 73 Misc2d 241).

Most nations have some provisions for not getting vaccinated, though since COVID-19, some prior provisions have been overridden (and this includes in the USA).

Some professions and others for various reasons may need to (or be required to) get one or more vaccines or other medical interventions and the Church does not prohibit this.

The Church also holds that we, as a body, are to work to fulfill Jesus' commissions listed in scriptures such as Matthew 24:14, Matthew 28:19-20, and Mark 16:15. These commissions involve reaching people in all nations. Hence, some individuals may wish to voluntarily receive vaccinations or comply with various medical guidelines which will allow them

to travel to support the commission or otherwise support the work.

The Church holds the doctrinal position that “that which is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). Therefore, being immunized/inoculated/vaccinated/medically — treated could constitute sin for someone based on their beliefs.

Because many issues with vaccines and medicines, as well as individual reactions to them, the Church fully supports any members request for exemption from immunization/inoculation/vaccination/medical intervention for his/her self. Church of God members, have requested exemptions from vaccinations (and some other medical procedures) since the 20th century, which is the century that vaccines became more widely used and available.

It is not the position of the Church to tell someone if they must or must not receive a vaccine or some other medical intervention.

As the Apostle Paul wrote:

5 ... Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.
(Romans 14:5)

Count the cost (cf. Luke 14:28) and consider getting wise counsel (Proverbs 11:14) when making a vaccine or non-vaccine decision. When making decisions for children, also be cognizant of local laws.

It has always been my (Bob Thiel's) view that if, in order to travel for church reasons or regular work (e.g., 2 Thessalonians 3:10), etc, we would have to get a vaccine, we would consider doing so as we do not consider it biblically prohibited nor is it “the mark of the beast.”

In our family's case, none of our sons were vaccinated as children as we saw no real need for them then.

In early 2021, my wife Joyce and I concluded that in order to go to Australia or Puerto Rico for the Feast of Tabernacles as well as for other travel to Europe on CCOG business, we may have to get a COVID vaccine to help fulfill Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, etc., even if there may be dangers (cf. Mark 8:35, 16:18). Other speakers from the USA who intended to go to foreign lands for the Feast of Tabernacles had to either forgo going or get one or more legally-approved shots in

order to enter those lands.

This does not mean any of us placed our trust in vaccines nor that we trust the pharmaceutical industry.

The new COVID-19 vaccines seem to be quite different from most earlier vaccines, and hence may cause problems in some people that no one has anticipated. Notice the following:

There is a race to get the public vaccinated, ... these will be the first — ever messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines brought to market for human patients.

In order to receive Food and Drug Administration approval, the companies will have to prove there are no immediate or short-term negative health effects from taking the vaccines. But when the world begins inoculating itself with these completely new and revolutionary vaccines, it will know virtually nothing about their long-term effects. ... there are unique and unknown risks to messenger RNA vaccines, including local and systemic inflammatory responses that could lead to autoimmune conditions. ...

MICHAL LINIAL, a professor of biological chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told the Post ... that “mRNA is a very fragile molecule, meaning it can be destroyed very easily... If you put mRNA on the table, for example, in a minute there will not be any mRNA leftover. This is as opposed to DNA, which is as stable as you get.” ... she said several questions remain, such as whether these vaccines will really be able to mount a sufficiently protective immune response and how long that immunity would last.

“It would be the worst [scenario] if people behave like they are immune but can still become infected,” Linial said. (Jaffe — Hoffman M. Could mRNA COVID-19 vaccines be dangerous in the long — term? Jerusalem Post, November 17, 2020)

Since that came out, the mRNA ‘vaccines’ have proven to be very fragile, which is one of the reasons that many are advising ‘boosters.’ And, many who have gotten vaccinated have been infected — though they tend to have less severe symptoms than the

unvaccinated who get various versions of COVID.

Human “health experts” do not know ALL. Unlike God, whose understanding is infinite (Psalm 147:5), humans are limited, have biases, and simply cannot know everything. There can always be unintended consequences with medical interventions, including vaccines, for many reasons (including biochemical individuality).

Currently, many governmental leaders want to force vaccines and sometimes pretend that such pressure is voluntary – despite the short testing time, and relatively recent release, for the COVID ones they are in the process of pressuring people to take.

My wife and I recognize that there are health risks associated with pretty much all vaccines (and many medical interventions), and many of those risks are not known until years after people get vaccinated and/or treated.

Personally, I prefer more natural approaches to medical ones. And despite working with people of ill health for decades, I have not taken a prescription Rx since being persuaded to take a total of three pills over as many days in late 1977.

That being said, many overly tout what they call “natural interventions” to deal with issues that they do not always properly help with. And even if natural interventions do help (for example I have successfully treated people with viruses), airlines, most companies, and the majority of government officials often do not count them as legitimate — and hence we will see much pressure towards pushing vaccines as well as other medical interventions.

In the case of COVID, the most currently available vaccines have been reported to make many feel ill. But their use is something much of society is pushing.

Europe essentially now has a COVID vaccine passport as do various national governments. Without vaccine proof, travel, restaurants, shopping, and even work may be prohibited.

Back in 1885, the US government would not allow foreigners to enter the country without proof of a smallpox vaccination. For about 70 years, Yellow Fever vaccines, which are made in involving mouse embryos, have been required to enter multiple

nations, particularly in Africa.

Yes, biblically — unclean animals (cf. Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) have often been used to make vaccines, and it has been stated that aborted fetal tissues have sometimes been involved. Also, there are various neurotoxins that are regularly used.

This does not mean that we must avoid all vaccines, but we need to use wisdom and place our true confidence in God. In order to visit and evangelize in many African nations, numerous Church of God ministers and members received that vaccine from the 20th century to present.

In the 1980s, the old Worldwide Church of God taught that ingredients in medications or shots which may be unclean to eat as food, were not prohibited for Christians to use. This was consistent with earlier statements it published in the 1970s related to “Insulin, whether of chemical or animal origin” (e.g., Hoeh H. Healing: Teaching and Administration. The Bulletin of the Worldwide Church of God and Ambassador College, September 23, 1974, p. 495) and Yellow Fever (e.g., Schroeder D. THE MOST NEGLECTED KEY TO BETTER HEALTH. Plain Truth, January 1977, p. 8). It also taught:

Paul expressed to the Roman Christians: “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10).

And: “Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a

stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (verse 13).

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (verse 8). (Hoeh, p. 495)

Speaking of the old Worldwide Church of God, it sent ministers and their wives to various nations in places like Africa that will NOT let one enter without one or more vaccines. Though some seem to think that means that the door to proclaim the gospel to those lands is closed, that is not how the old WCG viewed

it nor how the CCOG currently views it (cf. Romans 11:25).

Those positions are consistent with the words of Jesus, who said:

35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. (Mark 8:35)

Jesus (e.g., John 7:1-10) and the Apostle Paul (e.g., Acts 21:7-15) were willing to go into areas that held danger, not to test God, but to reach those they were supposed to reach (e.g. Acts 21:13).

It is good to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the world (cf. Romans 10:14-15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 96:2-3). The Book of Proverbs teaches:

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. (Proverbs 3:27)

And that is a reason many in the Churches of God have gotten various vaccines since the 20th century to reach people. We are to go where we can, and not rely on excuses (cf. Proverbs 26:13, 28:1).

Notice also something from the New Testament:

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 9 As it is written:

"He has dispersed abroad,

He has given to the poor;

His righteousness endures forever." (2 Corinthians 9:8-9)

Yes, GOD is able to make all grace abound towards those doing His work — which can include dispersing the word of God abroad (2 Corinthians 9:10-12).

We must be willing to risk all in this life to be Christians. The Apostle Paul wrote:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

Being a "living sacrifice" sometimes that involves pain and difficulties.

Furthermore, consider also that the fulness/full number of the Gentiles must come in before Jesus returns (cf. Romans 11:25-26) and many Gentiles dominate lands that require one or more vaccines to enter.

As mentioned before, scriptures like Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20, and Mark 16:15 make it clear we are to reach people of lands all around the world. Furthermore, the principal in Mark 16:18 that those who do such proclamation will not be harmed by "deadly poison" (ESV) or "deadly things" (LSV) is also consistent with being willing to take a vaccine to 'do the work.'

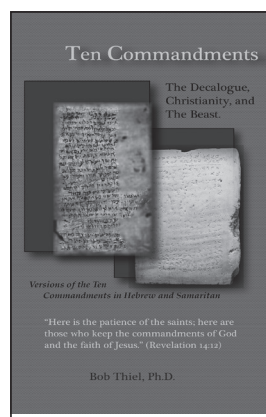
That being said, the world is moving more towards a type of religion that agrees with governments who often have little tolerance for those who hold minority views. Freedom of religion and freedom to make personal health decisions is being taken away around the world.

The vaccine situation is complicated, so you should do your own research. Be careful, however, as both pro — and anti — vaxxers are not always forthcoming and have been shown to exaggerate beyond real facts and/or make other inaccurate claims.

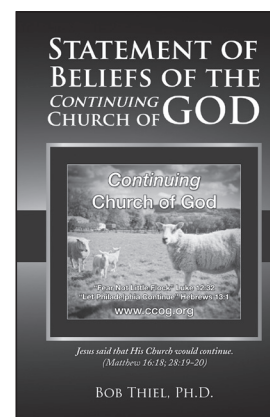
The CCOG cannot make the vaccine decision for you. But can declare that it is not biblically-wrong to get one for the sensible or biblical reasons.

"Let each be fully convinced in his own mind."
(Romans 14:5)

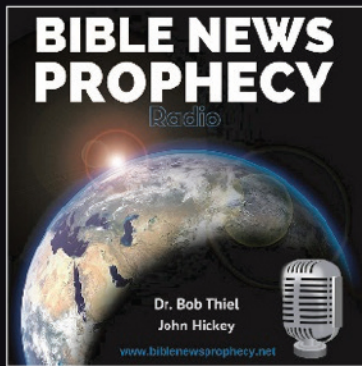
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Ten Commandments



Statement of Beliefs of the
Continuing Church of God



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



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

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