

ARE *YOU* PREDESTINED



TO BE SAVED?

ABOUT THIS COVER

The cover image for this booklet serves to contrast the darkness of ignorance and deception that shrouds this world against the marvelous truth that God is revealing through His Son, Jesus Christ: "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5. Compare, also, John 1:9; 8:12; 2 Peter 1:19; 2 Corinthians 4:3–6).

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Introduction

PREDESTINATION ... What comes to mind when you hear that word? If you answered that it is a Biblical term, you are correct. But do you know what it actually means?

Some say that God has predestined or “pre-decided” who should live forever and who should die in eternal hell fire. Others regard predestination as a sort of a catch-all form of fatalism—no matter what we want, God has already predetermined everything. Still others maintain that God has preordained *nothing*, as it would defeat man’s free will.

Funk & Wagnall’s Standard Desk Dictionary gives the following definition of the words “predestination” and “predestinate”: “To foreordain by divine decree or purpose... destiny; fate... foreordination of all things by God, including the salvation and damnation of man.”

So, then, how do we explain the Biblical use of the term “predestination”?

We will answer that question in this booklet, and we will show you how the Biblical concept of predestination is closely connected with the existence of several heavenly books. And we are not referring here to the Bible. Surprising as it may sound to those who have never heard this before, there are, indeed, several “spiritual books” and these books have great significance in the lives of mankind—especially for Christians.

It is, however, not our purpose to discuss the “Spirit World” at length in this booklet. We already have a booklet on that topic, entitled, “*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World,*” which will enable you to understand better who and what God is, and what God is DOING today. After reading both of these booklets, it should not be puzzling at all for you to realize that books do exist, which are composed of *spirit*, rather than of matter.

Chapter 1

THE BOOK OF LIFE

The most important heavenly book, or scroll, that pertains to God's true children is mentioned numerous times in Scripture. But many who have read these references have falsely assumed that this particular book is just a figurative expression, rather than a real, albeit spiritual book. The opposite is true. The book we are talking about is a VERY real book! It is called in Scripture, "the Book of Life."

For example, we read in Revelation 3:5: "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I [Jesus Christ] will not blot out his name from the *Book of Life*; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

On its face value, and without trying to "interpret" this passage, we are plainly told that the names of true Christians are written down in a particular book—the Book of Life—and that they will not be erased from it as long as they continue to overcome. We can also understand from this that their names *could* be blotted out from the Book of Life.

At the end of the book of Revelation, in the 21st chapter, we are again introduced to the Book of Life. We read in verse 27: "But there shall by no means enter it [the new Jerusalem] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's *Book of Life*." Jesus Christ—the Lamb—is the OWNER of the Book of Life. It is His Book! It appears that He is also the AUTHOR of this Book. It is He who can blot out the names of certain ones, and so it seems to follow that it is He who wrote those names in the Book of Life to begin with. We also learn some additional characteristics of those whose names will have been written (by the time of Revelation 21) in the Book of Life—they don't defile or cause an abomination or a lie.

Just one chapter earlier, we are introduced to a time when all who have died without ever having been given a chance to KNOW Jesus Christ and accept Him as their personal Savior, will be given that opportunity. This time is commonly referred to by Biblical commentaries as "the Great White Throne Judgment." At that time, Christ will

resurrect them to physical life. They are portrayed as standing before God's throne, and, as we read in Revelation 20:12, "... another book was opened, which is the *Book of Life*."

In fact, the Great White Throne Judgment is a *period* of judgment. At the end of that period, "anyone *not found written* in the *Book of Life*" will be "cast into the lake of fire" (verse 15). This lake of fire is the "second" or "ultimate" final, eternal death, from which there will be no resurrection (verse 14). Those whose names are written in the Book of Life will escape eternal death. They are "holy," and as such, are immune from the second death (verse 6).

The prophet Isaiah mentioned the fact that those who are holy and whose names are written in the Book of Life *WILL* escape eternal death. We read in Isaiah 4:3: "And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone *who is recorded among the living* in Jerusalem." Moffat says here: "... all who are entered in the *book of life*." The sons of Korah wrote something similar in Psalm 87:6: "The Lord shall *number* His people *in the book*" (*Lamsa*).

It is also revealed that God may blot out, or *refuse* to enter the names of people in the Book of Life, in certain circumstances. We read in Ezekiel 13:9: "My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, *nor be written in the record* of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel."

This passage tells us that, at least at the time of the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, the names of false prophets would not be written in God's record—the Book of Life.

Christ tells us, in the 3rd chapter of the book of Revelation, that for those who overcome He will not blot out their names from the Book of Life (compare verse 5). However, in the 22nd chapter of the book of Revelation, we read: "... and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the *Book of Life*, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (verse 19). Even though some claim, for important reasons, that in this passage, the correct rendering should be "Tree of Life," rather than "Book of Life," it is, nevertheless, correct that God *DOES* erase the names of certain ones from the Book of Life, when it is warranted.

Moses also understood the existence of a heavenly, spiritual Book of

Life, and that God is able to erase names from it. Moses had to realize, however, who the ones will be whose names will be erased. When Israel sinned seriously against God by making a golden calf, Moses pleaded with His Creator to forgive them, in these words: "... 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, *blot me out of Your book which You have written*'" (Exodus 32:31–32).

We should take note of the fact that Moses took it for granted that at that time, his name was already in the Book of Life, and that God HAD ALREADY written that book. This is an important piece for the puzzle of the correct understanding of predestination.

What Moses was telling God here, in effect, was that he was willing to die the second death for the people. Such an attitude was very pleasing to God, and, in fact, Paul would later make a similar statement (compare Romans 9:1–4). But this is not, of course, how it works. Christ died the FIRST death—physical death—for all of us, so that WE don't have to die the second death—eternal spiritual death—if we repent of our sins, accept Christ as our personal Savior, and stay loyal and faithful to Him until we die. And so, God told Moses, in verse 33: "... 'Whoever has sinned against Me, *I will blot him out of My book.*'" *Moffat* renders this more clearly: "*I blot sinners out of my list of the living.*"

God was not telling Moses that every time someone sins, his name is being erased from the Book of Life. EVERY PERSON sins (Romans 3:9; 1 John 1:8, 10; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 Kings 8:46), except for Jesus Christ, Who never sinned when He was here in the flesh. This is true even for converted Christians, and it did not exclude Moses. But God was not about to erase the name of Moses from the Book of Life. God was referring here to "sinners"—those who *practice, or continue in the way of sin*, and DON'T WANT TO REPENT! God was speaking here about those who received the Holy Spirit—sanctified Christians—and who commit the unpardonable sin (compare Chapter 5 of this booklet). It is the unpardonable sin that leads to the second, or final death (compare Hebrews 10:26; 6:4–6).

David later explained the fate of those who commit the unpardonable sin: "Let them be *blotted out of the book of the living*, and not be written with the righteous" (Psalm 69:28). The *New Jerusalem Bible* renders it this way: "Erase them from the *book of life*, do not enroll them

among the upright.” The *Interlinear Bible* states, *verbatim*: “Blot them out of the *Book of Life*; yea, let them not be written with the righteous.”

WHEN ARE NAMES WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE?

The question we want to address now is, “WHEN does God write down the names in His Book of Life?” Much has been speculated about this. Some say that God does it when He calls someone to repentance and salvation. Others feel that He does so when the person is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit. Still others teach that God writes down the names of converted Christians in His Book of Life when those Christians die in the faith, or, “in the Lord.” Many other ideas exist, but what does God Himself say in His inspired written Word?

The truth is, God gives us hints. We can safely say that the Bible nowhere states that God writes the names of certain ones in the Book of Life only when they *die* “in the faith.” Rather, it is clear from the Biblical evidence that God does do so *BEFORE* someone dies in the faith.

Paul states clearly that the names of converted Christians (those who have repented and have been properly baptized and have received the Holy Spirit) *WERE ALREADY* written down in the Book of Life *while they were still alive*. He says in Philippians 4:3: “...help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *ARE* in the *Book of Life*.” (For more information as to who is a converted Christian in God’s eyes, please study our free booklet, “**Baptism—A Requirement For Salvation?**”).

Also, the angel Gabriel explained to the ancient prophet, Daniel, that at the end time, when the Great Tribulation strikes this earth, Michael, who is identified in Scripture as an archangel, will stand up to protect the “sons of your people”—true converted Christians (Daniel 12:1). Gabriel adds that at that time, “your people shall be delivered, Every one who is *found written in the book*” (same verse). At the very least, those will be “delivered” whose names are written in the Book of Life at that time. It is clear that God will not write their names in the Book of Life at the time of their death—rather, *their names had been already recorded BEFORE their death*.

In addition, we find that the names of certain ones were already written down in the Book of Life *BEFORE they became converted*. In Luke 10:20, Christ told 70 disciples that they should “...rejoice

because your names ARE *written in heaven*.” It is significant to understand that, at that time, they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit was not generally available to Christ’s disciples, as long as Christ was here on earth in the flesh (compare John 7:39). It was granted to the New Testament Church on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2.

This means that the names of those 70 disciples were written in God’s Book of Life PRIOR TO their conversion. And their names would remain written in heaven [where God’s Book of Life is kept], as long as they did not commit the unpardonable sin. This is true for EVERY Christian, in EVERY generation! As long as a true converted Christian, whose name has been written in the Book of Life, does not permanently and irrevocably fall away from God by committing the unpardonable sin, his name remains in the Book of Life and it will not be blotted out or erased from it. Paul explains this clearly in Hebrews 12:22–23: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are registered in heaven*, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Let us ask whether the fact that the names of 70 disciples were registered in heaven prior to their conversion was an unusual exception. Or does this reflect a pattern that God uses for all of those who are being called in this life to salvation? In other words, are the names of the “called-out ones” (members of the Church of God) written down in the Book of Life prior to, or only at the time of their conversion?

PRIOR TO CONVERSION?

Shortly before the return of Jesus Christ to this earth, a mighty and powerful *political* ruler, called “the beast,” will appear on the world scene to destroy many of God’s people. The fate of this man is predetermined, or *predestined*, if you please. He will “ascend” out of the past like one who ascends out of a “bottomless pit” and he will go “to perdition” or “destruction” (compare Revelation 11:7; 17:8, first sentence). This is an unshakable, unalterable prophecy about a man who has not yet been manifested or “revealed” on this earth. [This does not have to mean, however, that “the beast” will commit the unpardonable sin and be

destroyed forever in hell fire. See Chapter 5 of this booklet.]

He will soon show himself, as was prophesied by John almost 2,000 years ago. Those who belong to God will understand and consider this fact, having been alert and aware of the progress of world events all along. But others "...who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are NOT written in the *Book of Life* from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast..." (Revelation 17:8, second sentence). They will worship the beast, just as many Germans quite literally worshipped Adolph Hitler, calling him their savior or deliverer.

This passage, in Revelation 17:8, second sentence, may give us a clue as to WHEN names are written in the Book of Life. Consider that it says: "... whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world..." How do we understand the phrase, "from the foundation of the world"? Some say that this phrase refers to the fact that the Book of Life existed from the foundation of the world. Others say that this phrase reveals that some names have been written down in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, while the names of those who will marvel at the beast were not written down from the foundation of the world.

Which understanding is correct?

Let us first consider a few alternate translations and renderings to help clarify the meaning.

The *New Jerusalem Bible*, *Die Grosse Bibel*, and *Die Gute Nachricht*, state: "... whose names have not been written since the beginning of the world in the book of life."

Moffat renders this passage: "... whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life."

In placing the phrase "from the foundation of the world" after the phrase, "whose names have not been written," the thought is conveyed that the names of unconverted people were not written down from the foundation of the world, but that, by contrast, the names of true Christians WERE written down from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life.

Most translations place the phrase, "from the foundation of the world," **after** the phrase "Book of Life;" i.e., "...whose names have not been written in the book of life since the foundation of the world" (*Zuercher Bible*). [In the original Greek, both renderings are possible.]

This *could* indicate, *but does not have to*, that they prefer the understanding that it is the Book of Life that existed since the beginning, or foundation of the world.

There is an additional Scripture in the book of Revelation that addresses the phrases “Book of Life” and the “foundation of the world.” In that passage, John describes the beast as a political personage and the false prophet as a *religious* figure. Those who don’t belong to God will be deceived by this false prophet who will perform mighty miracles, empowered by Satan to do so. John summarizes these prophesied events, in advance, as follows: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the false prophet], whose names have not been written in the *Book of Life* of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Following the above-quoted rendering of the *New King James Bible*, the clear meaning is that it is the Lamb—Jesus Christ—who was slain from the foundation of the world. That is, it was established or preordained or *predestined* from the foundation of the world that Jesus Christ would come to this earth to die for our sins.

A few translations say: “... whose names have not been written in the *Book of Life* of the slain Lamb from the foundation of the world.” This could indicate the following three possible ways of understanding this phrase:

- that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world; or
- that the Book of Life existed from the foundation of the world; or
- that the names of those who will worship the false prophet were not written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life, while the names of those who belong to God *were* written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life.

Most translations render this entire passage in a third way [in the Greek, all three alternate renditions are possible]:

The *Living Bible* states: “... whose names were not written down before the foundation of the world in the slain Lamb’s *Book of Life*.”

The *Revised Standard Version* says: “... every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.”

The *New American Bible* translates: “... all whose names were not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, which belongs to the Lamb who was slain.”

The *New Jerusalem Bible* states: "... whose name has not been written down since the foundation of the world in the sacrificial Lamb's book of life."

Moffat says: "... everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life."

Die Grosse Bibel renders the phrase: "... all whose names have not been written since creation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb which has been slain."

Luther translates: "... whose names are not written from the beginning of the world in the book of life of the lamb, which is slain."

The *Zuercher Bibel* states: "... whose name is not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb which is slain."

Die Gute Nachricht says: "... all, whose names are not written since the beginning of the world in the book of life of the slain lamb."

All of those translations, quoted above, convey their understanding that the names of those who will worship the false prophet will not have been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life, or ever since, while the names of those who belong to God were already, from the foundation of the world, recorded in the Book of Life.

NAMES KNOWN TO GOD?

Let's go a step further, and ask the question: Is it even Biblically POSSIBLE to suggest that names of certain people—of those who become converted Christians in this life, prior to Christ's Second Coming—were written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life; that is, sometimes thousands of years BEFORE they were born?

Again, is it Biblically possible to suggest that God knew thousands of years ago that certain individuals with specific names would exist and be called to salvation in this life, prior to Christ's Second Coming, and that God wrote those names from the foundation of the world in His Book of Life?

To put it still differently: Is it Biblically possible to suggest that God has determined from the creation of man, or maybe even before man's creation, *whom specifically* He would call to salvation *in this life, prior to Christ's Second Coming, with the possibility, of course, that such a called person might still fall away, so that his name would have to be erased from the Book of Life?* And, has God known their names, or has He *named* those

individuals already from the foundation of the world?

Before one shudders at the idea, rejecting it as too weird or unbelievable, let us consider some interesting Scriptures that, in fact, do support this.

The prophet Jeremiah was told by God, “*Before* I formed you in the womb, I *knew* you; *before* you were born I *sanctified* you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). We are told here that God the Father and Jesus Christ knew Jeremiah *BEFORE* he was formed in his mother’s womb, though we are not told *how long* before his birth God knew him.

In Ezra 1:1, we read that King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation to rebuild the temple, in fulfillment of God’s prophecies in Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1. It is interesting that these prophecies *named* Cyrus, even though they were written hundreds of years *before* Cyrus was born. However, even though God called Cyrus for a certain task, He did not call him to salvation.

In 1 Kings 13:2, a man of God prophesied that a child, “*Josiah by name,*” would sacrifice the priests of Baal on an altar, and burn their bones on the altar. King Josiah of Judah fulfilled this prophecy more than 400 years later (compare 2 Kings 23:15, 16).

Also, Ecclesiastes 6:10 sets forth an interesting observation: “Whatever one is, he has been *named* already, for it is known that he is man, and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than He.” The *Revised English Bible* states: “Whatever exists has already been given a *name.*” The *New American Bible*’s rendering is: “Whatever is, was *long ago* given its *name.*” The *Elberfelder* translation says: “What happens, *his name* has been known, and it is revealed what a man will be.” *Die Grosse Bibel* puts it in this way: “Whatever somebody was, he had already received his *name* before.”

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ who persecuted Christians under his original name of Saul, would later state that God “separated me from my mother’s womb and *called me* through His grace” (Galatians 1:15). Although this passage does not specifically reveal that God knew Paul *before* his birth *by name*, it might very well be implied. We might add here that God gave Saul a new name—that of Paul. The Bible records additional examples where God actually changed the name of a person and gave him or her a new name. This is interesting when considering

that God might have written in the Book of Life the *changed* names of certain individuals, rather than their *original* “birth” names.

Paul makes a similar observation about God’s foreknowledge in Romans 9:10–13, when he discusses God’s mystery of election: “...when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God *according to election* might stand, not of works but of Him *who calls*), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*’”

Again, it is implied here that God knew the older Esau and the younger Jacob, *by name, before* they were born, and that He had *already* called Jacob and rejected Esau, *prior to their birth*. In that sense, God “loved” Jacob and “hated” Esau—that is, He loved Esau less by comparison, insofar as the *timing of God’s election* was concerned.

We note that God knew, or saw to it, that the King of Persia, who would issue a proclamation to rebuild Jerusalem, would be *named* Cyrus; and that the King of Judah, who would sacrifice the priests of Baal on an altar, would be *named* Josiah. God had His angel, Gabriel, proclaim to Zacharias that he would have a son named John (Luke 1:13), and He saw to it, by miraculous intervention, that the boy was, indeed, named this way by his parents (Luke 1:59–63). How long *before* the time of John’s birth or conception did God *know that* John the Baptist would exist, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17)?

Another question would be, How long before the time of *Christ’s* birth did God know that the Messiah, *named* Jesus Christ, would come to die for mankind? The answer to this last question is obvious. God knew this at least from the time when man had committed sin, as revealed in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you [the devil] and the woman [Eve], and between your seed and her Seed [Christ]; He shall bruise your head [He will make Satan powerless, compare Romans 16:20], and you [the devil] shall bruise His heel [by having Him crucified].”

Christ was preordained, or *predestined*, to descend from the tribe of Judah; to be a descendant of Abraham and of David; to be crucified (compare Isaiah 53:7–9); to have soldiers cast lots over His garments (compare Matthew 27:35); and to be resurrected (compare Acts 2:25–35). There are many other Old Testament prophecies about the

Messiah that were fulfilled in the coming of Christ to this earth as a human being and His subsequent resurrection, all of which were prophesied long before these events ever took place.

FROM THE BEGINNING...

It is also noteworthy what is stated about Christ's knowledge about His betrayer Judas. We read in John 6:64: "For Jesus *knew from the beginning* who they were who did not believe, and who would *betray Him*."

What is meant by "from the beginning"? Since *when*, exactly, did Christ know who would not believe Him, and when did He know that it would be Judas who would betray Him? Did He only know *before* His life as a human being that *a Judas*—any person who might qualify for that job—might betray Him, or was Christ's foreknowledge much more specific?

Christ *knew* that one of the twelve whom He chose was "a devil" (John 6:70). In John 17:12, Christ prayed to the Father, "Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except *the son of perdition*, that the *Scripture might be fulfilled*." Peter, one of Christ's original apostles, later explained that Judas "fell" from apostleship, when he stated, "Judas left it and went to *his place which was predestined for him*." (Acts 1:25; *Die Grosse Bibel*).

Again, how long *before* Judas' betrayal did God and Christ know that it would be *he*?

In searching for the answers to these questions, we cannot underestimate God's ability to foresee and control the future. Jude 4 reminds us of the following: "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who *long ago were marked out* for this condemnation." *How long ago* was it that God took note of these people? Paul asked in Romans 9:22: "What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath *prepared for destruction*...?" [Compare Proverbs 16:4: "The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom."].

But Paul does not stop here. He continues in Romans 9:23: "...and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He *had prepared beforehand* for glory, even *us* whom He *called*" (verses 23–24). Read that again! We are told here that God has prepared US—YOU and me—BEFOREHAND. This is a very specific

and detailed statement that focuses on a special group of people. It says that *HE called US*, and that *HE prepared US* beforehand! With that understanding, we might wonder, *How long ago* did this preparation take place? Does this go back to our childhood years, or does it go back even further, say, to our parents, our grandparents and our great-grandparents? Just *where* and *when* did God begin to prepare us for His glory?

Consider this statement by Paul in Romans 8:28–30: “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. For *whom* He *foreknew*, He also *predestined*, to be conformed to the image of His Son... Moreover *whom* He predestined, *these* He also *called*; *whom* He *called*, *these* He also justified; and *whom* He justified, *these* He also glorified.”

Again, this is a very specific statement that refers to specific individuals. *Long before* God calls His people to salvation, He has already *foreknown and predestined* them. Again, *how long* before? Remember that God *knew* Jeremiah *before* he was born. We are no different. God also *knew us before* we were born.

In Ephesians 1:4–5, 11–12, Paul elaborates on this issue: “...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, having *predestined us* to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will... 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, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

Some have felt that God has set aside certain *positions* from the foundation of the world and that He subsequently calls certain ones to fill those positions, without having known the individuals before. HOWEVER, the Bible does not use the word nor the concept of “positions” in the context of predestination. Rather, **the Bible plainly says that God has predestined US, before the foundation of the world, to be called in this life to salvation, prior to Christ’s return.** In fact, the Bible says that He first called US, so that we can fill certain positions or “mansions,” which Christ is preparing NOW for us (compare John 14:2). In other words, Christ is now preparing a “place” or position of rulership in God’s Kingdom for US—those of us whom He foreknew before the foundation of the world. And,

as we will see, our positions of rulership are dependent on how we do in this life.

We read earlier, in Revelation 17:8 and 13:8, using several translations, that the names of true Christians have been written *before the foundation of the world* “**in the Book of Life.**” We read in Ephesians 1:4 that *we*, IF we are true Christians, have been chosen in God and predestined “*before the foundation of the world.*” This means, then, in order to harmonize both passages, that those translators are correct who render Revelation 17:8 and 13:8 in such a way as to say that the names of those who will worship the beast and the false prophet were not written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life. From this, it follows that the names of those who belong to God **were already written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life.** This is truly an awesome thing to comprehend! But, that’s not all!

In 1 Peter 1:2, we read that we are the “*elect* according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father.” Paul explains in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 that “we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, *brethren beloved by the Lord* because God *from the beginning chose you* for salvation.”

We are reminded that Christ knew “*from the beginning*” who would not believe Him, and who would betray Him. The reason why Christ knew ahead of time who the ones were who would not believe, is based on the fact that Christ would not grant those *unbelieving* people a *believing* heart. Only when God CALLS us to the truth and OPENS our mind, can we understand and believe. **Predestination, then, has to do with God’s decision of whom, and when, to call and whom not to call in this present day and age,** just prior to Christ’s Second Coming.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:8–9: “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 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.*”

So then, did God know from, or even before, the foundation of the world—before time began—that He would call certain ones to salvation? Based on the testimony of Scripture, the answer is, Yes! And the Bible also indicates that God knew *whom specifically* He would call in this present time.

In Acts 13:48, we are told, “And as many as had been *appointed to eternal life* believed.” The *New Revised Standard Version* states: “As many as had been *destined for eternal life* became believers.” Moffat writes: “All who had been *ordained for eternal life...*” An interesting version is presented by the German *Menge Bible*: “And all, *so long as* they were ordained for eternal life, became believers.”

Acts 2:47 sheds further light on this matter. The *Authorized Version* translates this passage: “The Lord added to the church daily such as *should be saved.*” Although some commentaries feel this to be an inaccurate rendering, others agree with the rendering of the *Authorized Version*. The *New Jerusalem Bible* states that God added those to the Church who were “*destined to be saved.*” *Die Grosse Bibel* translates, “The Lord added daily those who *were to be saved.*”

A CERTAIN NUMBER CALLED

The book of Revelation supports the concept that not only did God know *whom specifically* He would call to salvation in this present time, but He also designated that a certain *number* of Christians had to be reached *before* specific events could take place in the end-time. In Revelation 6:11, we are introduced to Christian martyrs who were killed over the centuries. We read: “It was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants* and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, *was completed.*”

We are reminded, in this context, of Christ’s sayings to Peter after His resurrection: “‘When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.’ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God” (John 21: 18–19). Christ knew well in advance, *when and how* Peter would die.

Let us also remember Revelation 7:4–8 where 144,000 Christians are sealed *before* the four angels could harm the earth. These are sealed to be protected from the wrath of God. We note that exactly 12,000 of each tribe of Israel (excluding the tribe of Dan) are sealed. Once their *number is completed*, the angels can begin to pour out God’s wrath on the earth, the wind and the sea (verse 3).

We can say, based on the Biblical evidence presented so far, that

these 144,000 were *predestined* to be called to salvation in this life, prior to Christ's return. In fact, we are told that their *number* must be completed before Christ can and will return.

Rienecker, a German commentary, writes about "Election": "Predestination is an action of God through which he assigns certain people to the Church *before their birth*, in order to become equal with Christ and attain to His glory (Romans 8:28; John 17:24; Gal. 1:15)."

Predestination does not mean that we whom God has called to salvation at this time are guaranteed to attain eternal life. But it DOES mean that we were preordained—"predestined"—by God *to be called* to salvation in this life, so that we CAN attain eternal life at the time of the resurrection. We can also fail, however.

Predestination, then, has to do with the *time of our calling to salvation*. It also has to do with the fact that our names—the names of those who are called in this life—are written in the Book of Life, and that they have been written in it since the foundation of the world—before time began—and that our names will remain in that Book, as long as we do not commit the unpardonable sin.

Note the following quote from Herbert W. Armstrong's booklet, "*Predestination... Does the Bible teach it?*", copyrighted 1957, pages 14 and 15: "... predestination has... only to do with the TIME of your calling—whether you are called NOW, in this age, or later! Notice it in the passage in Romans 8:28–30: 'For whom He did foreknow.' How GREAT is God! If you are now called, God '**foreknew**' you—**Knew you thousands of years before you were born!**... 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. All others have their call later! God... 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! (Emphasis in the original, and added)."

To reiterate: God predestined thousands of years ago whom to call to salvation prior to Christ's return. He will call many, in fact, most, AFTER Christ's return, during the Millennium when Christ will rule on this earth for 1,000 years, and during the time of the Great White Throne Judgment period, following the Second Resurrection. During

that period, the Book of Life will be opened *for them*, so that their names CAN be written in the Book of Life *at that time*.

If YOU are called today to salvation—if YOU have been preordained and *predestined* to be called in this life—God KNOWS that you can make it and He is confident that you *WILL* make it (see Chapter 6 of this booklet). As far as God is concerned, you are already there—your name is written in the Book of Life—you have already entered the Kingdom of God—that is, in God's eyes, you are already in His Kingdom. (For a thorough discussion of this truth, read Chapter 6 of this booklet. We understand, of course, that God's Kingdom has not yet been established here on earth, but that it will be in the near future, at the time of Christ's return). Only YOU can stop this process, by turning your back on God! Only YOU can make the decision to *REJECT* God's predetermined and *predestined* plan for you! Only YOU can decide to give up!

Please don't! Times are tough, and they will get tougher—but you CAN, and *WILL* make it, if you let God take the lead in your life. Follow His lead! *CONTINUE* to follow His lead, and you *WILL BE* in His Kingdom in a very few years from now.

Chapter 2

THE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

The Book of Life is not the only heavenly book, which is mentioned in the Bible. There are additional heavenly books mentioned in Scripture. They, too, have relevance for our calling, and they have a direct connection with the concept of *predestination*.

A publication entitled, “*Bible Facts*,” points out on pp.114–115: “The most commonly mentioned heavenly book is the Book of Life. It refers to the keeping of an account of those who are truly believers and those who are not. In Revelation, those whose names are found written in the Book of Life will escape the everlasting judgment. Most other heavenly books are related to the Book of Life in some way.”

A very crucial heavenly book, which is mentioned in numerous Scriptures, is the “Book of Remembrance.” Some teach that this book is identical with the “Book of Life,” but this is not the case. These are two different books.

We are introduced to the Book of Remembrance in Malachi 3:16: “Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a *book of remembrance* was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.”

As will become clear throughout this booklet, the “Book of Remembrance” records deeds, words and even thoughts of people on which they will be judged and will receive either *rewards or penalties*. The “Book of Life,” on the other hand, records the names of those who are to receive *eternal life*.

Note how the *New American Bible* translates Malachi 3:16: “And a *record book* was written before Him of those who fear the Lord.” The *Lamsa Bible* says: “And the Lord heard it, and He wrote it in a *book of remembrance* before Him for those who revere Him and for those who praise His name.”

Does the Bible tell us what is being recorded in God’s Book of Remembrance? Yes, indeed.

In Psalm 56:8, David explains: “You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in *Your book*?” The *Living Bible* gives the meaning, as follows: “You have collected all my tears and preserved them in your bottle. You have recorded every one in your book.” The German “*Pattloch*” Bible says: “You have written down my misery, my tears are collected in your bottle, in your book.” The Jewish commentary, *The Soncino*, remarks: “All his sufferings are recorded in God’s book of remembrance, cp. Mal. 3:16.”

WHAT DID GOD FORESEE?

In Psalm 139:16, David seems to be going a big step further. He exclaims: “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in *Your book* they all were written, **the days** fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”

What did David mean with his remarks? Did God actually foresee David’s **days**, prior to his birth? And if so, how?

Let us check a few more renderings of this phrase.

The *New International Version* renders this passage in this way: “All the **days** ordained for me were written in your book, before one of them came to be.” They add the following footnote: “God’s loving involvement with our lives starts long before birth.”

The *Living Bible* interprets: “You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every **day** was recorded in your book.” Similar wording is used by the *New Revised Standard Version*: “In your book were written all the **days** that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.”

The *New Jerusalem Bible* agrees: “In your book all my **days** were inscribed; every one that was fixed is there.” *Moffat* writes: “All the **days** of my life were foreseen by thee, set down within thy book; ere ever they took shape, they were assigned me, ere ever one of them was mine.”

Most reputable German translations give similar renditions. The *Luther Bible* states: “All **days** were written in your book, which were to come and which did not yet exist.” *Menge* writes: “And in your book were recorded all **days** which were foreordained, when none of them yet existed.” The *Zuercher Bible* states: “Your eyes saw all my **days**. In your book they were all written; they were fashioned, when none of them yet existed.” Finally, the *Elberfelder Bible* says: “And in your book

they were all recorded, the **days** which were being fashioned, when none of them [existed].”

These translations convey the thought that God recorded *the days* of David in His Book of Remembrance before David was born.

Other translations go a step further. For example, the *New American Bible* says: “Your eyes foresaw my **actions**; in your book all were written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be.” The *Revised English Bible* puts it in this way: “Your eyes foresaw my **deeds**, and they were all recorded in your book; my life was fashioned before it had come into being.” The *Lamsa Bible* says: “And upon thy books all **these things** were written even before day was and man was brought into existence.” *Die Grosse Bibel* states: “Your eyes saw how I came into being, in your book **everything** was already recorded; my days were already fashioned when none of them existed.”

The *Ryrie Study Bible* gives the following comments: “The days of David’s life were written in God’s book, affirming God’s prior knowledge and plan of everything in David’s life.”

But is this true? Did God know *everything* about David—what he would do—before he was born? As we will see, the answer to this question is “no”—not because God could not foresee it, but because He *has chosen not to know everything in advance*, to allow for people’s free will. (However, even if God had chosen to know, that would not affect our choices.) On the other hand, it is very clear that God knew a LOT about David BEFORE he was born. Even when God called him, He said that He had found David, a man after His own heart who would do all His will (Acts 13:22).

There are some translations which give quite a *different rendering* of Psalm 139:16.

The *Authorized Version* states: “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; And in thy book all **my members** were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” The German *Pattloch Bible* says: “Your eyes saw already my **incomplete parts**, and in your book they were all recorded; the days of life were fashioned when none of them yet existed.”

Why are there so many different versions and attempts to translate Psalm 139:16? The reason for these varying interpretations becomes clear when we consider that the translators added, in each case, certain

words that are not found in the original Hebrew. When we review the *Interlinear Bible*, we see what the original text actually says: “Your eyes saw my embryo; and in your book all were written; the days they were formed, and none among them.”

The translators added words such as “days,” “actions,” “deeds,” “these things,” “everything,” “my members” and “incomplete parts,” to convey what they felt God had written in His book about David. That God had written *something* in His Book of Remembrance regarding David, prior to his birth, is obvious; but a decision had to be made by the translators as to *what, exactly*, God had recorded in advance.

The Jewish commentary, *The Soncino*, explains: “The older commentaries took the subject [i.e., what was recorded by God in advance] to be *all the limbs* which would develop from the embryo. It is now considered that we have here the doctrine of predestination. God has a book in which is recorded against each person, from the embryonic stage, the number of days which would be lived.”

Is this true? Does God decree in advance, or foreknow, how long a person would live?

THE LENGTH OF DAYS

We know that this is true, in a broad general sense, when considering Psalm 90:10, where we read: “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

But this passage does not give any specifics for individuals. We know, for instance, that some people live for 90 or even 100 years.

Does the Bible teach or allow the concept that the exact life span of at least certain individuals was decreed or foreknown by God prior to their birth?

It appears that ancient Job might have been of that persuasion, unless he was just speaking in general terms. We read in Job 14:1, 5: “Man who is born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble... Since *his days are determined, the number of his months is with You*; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.”

The *New International Version* renders Job’s statement as follows: “You have decreed the number of his months.” The *New Revised Standard Version* writes: “The number of their months is known to you.”

The *New American Bible* says: "...You have fixed the limit which he cannot pass." The *New Jerusalem Bible* states: "... his days are measured out." *Lamsa* writes: "His days are determined and the number of his months are decreed." The *Elberfelder Bible* says: "When his days are fixed, the number of his months established with you, when you have given him his aim which he cannot pass, so look away from him." The German *Menge Bible* states: "When his days are exactly measured, and the number of his months is established with you." The Swiss *Zuercher Bible* writes: "When his days are determined and the number of his months decreed."

The Soncino Commentary remarks: "God has determined precisely the limits of man's life."

But how? Did God decree in advance how long certain people would live? And if so, can this be altered by God, based on individual circumstances?

Before one shakes his or her head in disbelief, let us consider a few additional Biblical facts.

TIMES AND LANDS OF NATIONS

We are told in Acts 17:26–28, that God has decreed, in advance, the times of nations, prior to their existence: "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being..."

We find an additional statement of God's foreknowledge and pre-appointment, regarding the existence of nations, in Deuteronomy 32:8: "When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, *He set the boundaries of the peoples* According to the number of the children of Israel." This statement is highly remarkable because when God separated the sons of Adam (compare, for example, Genesis 11:8) and gave them their land, Israel, the son of Isaac, or Israel's children, did not even exist. The individual, called Jacob or Israel, would only be born many years later, and the nation of Israel would not emerge for many hundreds of years. Still, God says that He set the boundaries of the peoples "according to the *number* of the

children of Israel,” stating that He knew that the children of Israel would exist in the future and implying that He even knew *their number*. Paul confirms this fact in Romans 11:2: “God has not cast away His people [Israel] whom He *foreknew*.”

The Bible emphasizes God’s foreknowledge in regard to the life span of *certain* nations and their leaders. For instance, we read in Genesis 15:13, 16, that God told Abraham that the children of Israel (not yet in existence) would be afflicted in Egypt for “four hundred years,” and that in the “fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites [which were possessing the land at the time] is not yet complete.” God allotted a certain time to the Amorites to live in the land, but when that time had expired, Israel would drive them out and possess the land.

We are also told, in Daniel 7:12, that certain world-ruling empires would exist for a certain, pre-determined time. In that prophecy, these Gentile empires are described as “beasts.” We read: “As for the rest of the beasts . . . , their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.” Other translations make the intended meaning clearer. The *Menge Bible* says: “Their duration of life was fixed for time and hour.” *Die Grosse Bibel* states: “They kept their lives until a determined time.” The *Elberfelder Bible* translates: “Duration of life was given to them until the time and hour.”

We have already read about an end-time political figure, called “the beast” in the prophecies of the book of Revelation. God has predetermined that this “beast” or political leader, as well as the government he will represent, will rule for “one hour” (Revelation 17:12). During this time, he will persecute God’s people (compare Revelation 13:7). We are told, in Daniel 7:25, that this Biblical term (“one hour”) means, in this case, 3½ years.

The “beast” or political figure only represents the leader of the last revival of the ancient Roman Empire. As we explain in our booklets, “*Europe in Prophecy*” and “*The Fall and Rise of Britain and America*,” the ancient Roman Empire was to be resurrected ten times, since the fall of ancient Rome. The Bible tells us, in Revelation 13:5, that the revived Roman Empire would exist exactly for “forty-two months” since the healing of its deadly wound (compare verse 3). History confirms that it did in fact reign for 1,260 years (42 prophetic months consist of

1,260 prophetic days or years), from the healing of the “deadly wound,” under Justinian, in AD 554, until the fall of Napoleon I, in AD 1814. After Napoleon’s fall, two more resurrections of the ancient Roman Empire were to occur. One has already occurred—the last and final one is shaping up right now in Europe.

The concept that God, at times, predetermines the life span of nations, kings and individuals, is supported Biblically.

CAN GOD’S PREDETERMINATION BE ALTERED?

On the other hand, the Bible indicates that God will, at times, prolong or shorten days and years, depending on man’s conduct. We read in Proverbs 10:27: “The fear of the LORD *prolongs* days, But the years of the wicked will be *shortened*.” Psalm 55:23 states: “...Bloodthirsty and deceitful men *shall not live out half of their days*.” We might recall how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah when He could not find ten righteous people there.

We read about an interesting episode in the life of King Hezekiah. When God told Hezekiah that he would die soon, the king prayed a heart-rending prayer. As a consequence, God *prolonged* Hezekiah’s life by 15 years (compare Isaiah 38:5, 10). Also, the book of Jonah reports that God sent Jonah to Niniveh to proclaim to them that the city would be destroyed in 40 days. But the people of Niniveh repented and God *prolonged* their lives by not destroying them and the city. We also read in Exodus 32:10 that God was apparently willing to kill the Israelites when they had built a golden calf, but when Moses interceded for them, God relented and thereby *prolonged* the lives of the Israelites by not destroying them at that time. However, He later said that the Israelites would wander in the desert for 40 years and that none of the older generation would enter the Promised Land because of their rebellion.

It is important that we seek God in our lives. We are told that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much (James 5:16). God has allotted to us a certain time to build our relationship with Him, and He tells us to seek Him while He can be found (Isaiah 55:6).

DELAYED OR ACCELERATED PROPHECIES

Prophecies are sure, but we need to realize that it is God’s prerogative as to WHEN the prophecies will be fulfilled. God may choose to

delay or accelerate end-time prophecies, depending on certain factors. Follow with us as we take a close look at some examples.

Hastening the Coming of Christ?

We read in 2 Peter 3:12 that we are to be “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God”—the return of Christ. This passage speaks especially to end-time Christians. The literal Greek translation of 2 Peter 3:12 reads, according to *The Englishman’s Greek New Testament... , An Interlinear Literal Translation*: “...expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God by reason of which [the] heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and [the] elements burning with heat shall melt...” The term “hastening” (as used in the *New King James Bible*) is a correct rendition. The *New English Bible* says: “look eagerly for the coming of the day of God and work to hasten it on.” The *New Testament in Modern Speech*, by Richard Francis Weymouth, says: “expecting and helping to hasten the coming of...”

The German *Elberfelder Bible* says, “*beschleunigen*.” This German word can mean “hastening” and it can also mean “accelerate.” In this context, we might consider Isaiah 62:7, which says, in the *Authorized Version*: “And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

How WE could possibly hasten or delay Christ’s return, to an extent, can be seen in 2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Although the time frame here encompasses the entire plan of God, it is apparent from the context that the end-time generation is especially addressed in this verse. The context is Christ’s coming, as verses 3–4 make very clear: “...scoffers will come IN THE LAST DAYS... and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’...”

According to 2 Peter 3:9, God may delay Christ’s coming, IF Church members whom God WANTS to be in His Kingdom, are not ready, due to a lack of serious repentance. The *Ryrie Study Bible* points out: “To believers, Peter now says that the seeming delay of Christ’s return is for the purpose of allowing more people to repent.”

Only the Father Knows

Some feel that the precise moment of Christ's return has been fixed for thousands of years and that the Father "knows" the exact moment of Christ's Second Coming, according to Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour no one KNOWS, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Note that Mark 13:32 adds that not even the Son of God—Jesus Christ—knows that exact time.

In light of the fact that Christ's return can be delayed or accelerated, as we read earlier, it is very doubtful that God the Father "has known" the exact day and hour of Christ's return for thousands of years. As we will explain, what Christ is actually saying in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 is that *it is within the Father's authority to DECIDE* when the moment of Christ's return will come. However, we must realize that that precise moment is, indeed, conditional, based upon certain events.

We need to put Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 together with Acts 1:6–7, which says: "Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time [return to] restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'"

One might assume that God knows everything, but did you realize there are certain things that God *does not want* to know? For instance, God chose not to know—at the time He called us into His truth—whether we would make it into His Kingdom or whether we would commit the unpardonable sin, even though He is confident that we will make it (see Chapters 5 and 6 of this booklet).

According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, No. 1492, the Greek word for "knows," in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, really means, to "see" (literally or figuratively), and it can also mean, by implication—but only when used in the perfect tense—to "know." In addition, it can be translated as, "be aware, behold, CONSIDER, BE SURE, TELL, UNDERSTAND, WISH."

We should also note that, according to the two passages in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, Christ said that men, angels and even Christ Himself do not know, but only "My Father." There is NO VERB here, following "My Father," so the verb must be added.

The passage in Acts 1:7 does not say that God the Father "knows" the exact time of Christ's return. It only says that it is not for Christ's

disciples to “know.” In regard to the Father, it is stated that He has “put this” in His own power or authority. In reading Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 together with Acts 1:7, it becomes apparent that the words that need to be supplied in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 would have to be those showing God’s AUTHORITY to set the date.

Therefore, a possible rendering of Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 would be: “But of that day and hour no one knows [“understands,” “can be sure”], not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father [“is sure,” “understands,” in the sense of: “decides”].”

The Bible does not say that the Father already decided thousands of years ago *WHEN* exactly to send back the Son. If He had, *HOW COULD* Christ NOT have known? Some claim that Christ knows now, while He did not know 2,000 years ago. However, Christ’s statements refer to the time of His return. Christ’s whole point was that He does not know or is sure of it (as He does not make the decision); hence, it is useless for man to try to figure it out.

God’s 6,000-Year Plan

The Bible, as well as Hebrew tradition, convey the concept that God has allotted to man about 6,000 years to govern himself, followed by 1,000 years of Godly rule here on earth, under Jesus Christ. Since God created man on the sixth day, followed by the weekly Sabbath, He has allotted 6,000 years of self-rule to mankind, followed by God’s Millennial Sabbath rule of 1,000 years of peace and tranquillity (compare Hebrews 4:4, 9, and 11).

Some have pointed to 2 Peter 3:8, claiming that God allotted man *exactly* 6,000 years to rule this earth, and that after *exactly* 6,000 years, Christ will return. However, that is not what 2 Peter 3:8 conveys. The Scripture reads: “... with the Lord one day is AS a thousand years, and a thousand years AS one day.”

This Scripture does not provide us with a fixed date. The Greek word for “as” is “*hos*,” and it can also be translated as “about.” (Compare *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, under “about.”) In fact, the *Authorized Version* translates this word 14 times as “about.” For instance, the word “*hos*” is correctly translated as “about” in passages such as Mark 8:9; Luke 2:37; 8:42; and John 1:39.

Strong’s points out, under #5613, that the Greek word “*hos*” is

“... very variously used, as follows: about, ... (according) as (it had been, it were)... even as (like)...”

From this we can know that 2 Peter 3:8 conveys the principle that in the eyes of God one day is ABOUT 1,000 years—not necessarily exactly so.

No More Delay

God says that there comes a time when He will no longer delay what He has purposed. Notice in Revelation 10:6, *Authorized Version*, that there should be “time no longer.” The *New King James Bible* says, “... there should be delay no longer.” The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments: “Lit. there will be no more delay.” So say the *Nelson Study Bible*, the *American Standard Version*, *Weymouth*, as well as the *Elberfelder Bible* (“*Frist, Aufschub*”) and the *Menge Bible* (“*Verzug*”).

The *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W.E. Vine, states, on page 333, under “season,” that the Greek word for “time” or “delay;” i.e., “*chronos*,” must be translated in Revelation 10:6 as “delay.”

Since Revelation 10:6 says that there will be no more delay, this shows that there HAD BEEN a delay before.

Ezekiel 12:25, 28 supports the concept of a delay prior to Christ’s return. It reads: “For I am the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will NO MORE be postponed... None of My words will be postponed ANY MORE...” This passage seems to say that, at one point, God’s words or prophecies were postponed or delayed; but that the time will come, when they won’t be postponed or delayed any longer. This would be similar to the passage in Revelation 10:6, which says that there will no longer be a “time” or “delay.”

Conditional Prophecies

Some prophecies are conditional, based upon whether man repents of his evil ways. Although it is not very likely that the USA or Great Britain will repent, it IS still possible. If they do, or if enough people repent, God may hold back the destruction of the USA and Great Britain. It appears that God would not have destroyed Sodom and Gomorra, if He had found ten righteous, although He said to Abraham earlier that He would destroy it. Something similar COULD BE POSSIBLE for modern America and Great Britain, as well as other nations.

The Scripture in Jeremiah 18:7–11 supports this conclusion. It says that God will relent of the evil that He intended to bring on a nation, if that nation repents. God required Jonah to proclaim that, in 40 days, Nineveh would be destroyed. This SOUNDED like an unconditional prophecy, but it was not, as God did not destroy it when Nineveh repented. However, as the book of Nahum shows, Nineveh was destroyed later. The book of Jonah contains a classic case of a DELAYED prophecy.

There are also passages in the book of Joel that leave it open as to whether or not God will start the “Day of the Lord” at a certain time, depending on man’s reaction and repentance (compare Joel 2:12–14). Although unconditional prophecy will not “fail,” time given for certain events to take their full course may. For example, Romans 9:28 tells us that God will CUT SHORT His work.

God’s Patience Is Not Limitless

Regardless of whether God chooses either to accelerate or delay the fulfillment of prophecy, one thing IS certain: God’s patience is not limitless, as the parable in Luke 13:6–9 shows. Christ had just warned His audience that they would perish if they did not repent (verses 1–5). He continued with a parable about a fig tree that had not shown fruits for three years. The tree is granted a fourth and last year, to either produce fruit, or to be cut down after that time. This parable implies that God does set a time limit for a Church member to repent and produce fruit.

Christ warned in John 15:2, 6: “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” God has allotted to His Church—and mankind as a whole—a certain amount of time to repent. But there will come the moment when *God WILL decide* to send Christ back. God will not wait forever for everyone in the Church—and in the world—to repent. As in the times of Jeremiah, the time will come when God will not hear any more prayers for the people of the world; a time when He will not tolerate any further delay; and a time when He will cut short His work (compare Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). That is the reason why we read in Isaiah 46:13 (*Authorized Version*): “I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and

I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.”

While the fulfillment of God’s prophecies may tarry for a while, the time will come when there will be no more delay or postponement. We read in Habakkuk 2:2–3: “... Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. THOUGH IT TARRIES [for a while, due to God’s longsuffering and patience toward us in the Church], wait for it; Because it will surely come, IT WILL NOT TARRY [once God has decreed the exact time when to send His Son back and to end man’s rule on earth].”

A WARNING!

There is great danger involved with the concept of trying to figure out, exactly, when Christ returns. The one problem is that if people think that God delays Christ’s coming, believing He is still afar off, they may become slack in their Christian lives and in progressing in their conversion (compare Matthew 24:48–50). On the other hand, the belief that Christ’s coming is just around the corner can create a sense of fatalism, especially in younger people, who may say, “Why should I think of getting a career, as everything will be over soon?” We must have a balanced approach and live as if we still had a whole lifetime ahead of us, with long-term goals, and, at the same time, we need always to be ready *spiritually* for Christ’s return. We must continue to watch and comprehend world events, which are leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Will Prophecies “Fail”?

Some refer to 1 Corinthians 13:8, claiming that this passage says that certain prophecies will not be fulfilled. However, this is not what that passage conveys. It reads: “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail.” Later, in verse 13, Paul says: “And now abide faith, hope, love.” The contrast here is between something that will endure forever, and something that will only endure for a while and then vanish away.

Please note that Paul is using different words for “fail” in verse 8. In the Greek, the word associated with “love” is “*ekpipto*,” which means, according to *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, “to fall off or

away.” The Greek word associated with “prophecy” is “*katargeo*.” It means, according to Young’s, “to make useless.” Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* gives, as one possible rendering, the expression, “vanish away.”

While love will always endure (as it is part of God’s character—in fact, God IS love; compare 1 John 4:8), prophecies will cease. They will come to an end. They will be fulfilled. This could be a reference to inspired preaching by men (as there will come a time when all men will have been changed into spirit beings, or, those who did not qualify for God’s Kingdom will have ceased to exist); or, it could refer to prophecies of the future. If the latter, then they will cease when the events prophesied will have come to pass.

We see then, that Paul is not saying that some of God’s prophecies, if they are UNCONDITIONAL, will not come to pass.

Predestined Unconditional Prophecies

Unconditional prophecies are certain, or “predestined,” and the free will of human beings cannot change that. God was certain from the outset that ancient Pharaoh would not let the people of Israel go, unless God forced him to do so (compare Romans 9:17; Exodus 3:19).

It was predetermined that the ancient Roman Empire would be resurrected ten times, and it is preordained that in the end time, when the ancient Roman Empire is revived for the last time, a false prophet and a beast will wreak havoc over this world. *We can see, then, that the concept of “predestination” also applies to unconditional prophecies which God has foreknown and foreordained to come to pass in due time.* For instance, we read that King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about events that would take place in the end time.

The prophet Daniel interpreted the meaning of the dream to the king. He told him, in Daniel 2:28–29, 45: “But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what *will be* in the latter days... He who reveals secrets has made known to you what *will be*... the great God has made known to the king what *will come to pass* after this. The dream is *certain*, and its interpretation is sure.”

Reflecting on what we have learned so far from Scripture, it becomes more and more difficult to try to completely “explain” what all God does know—and how He knows it. Truly, with much respect

toward God, we see only “dimly,” as through a dark mirror (1 Corinthians 13:12). His powers and abilities are so much more superior to ours. God is capable of things of which we have absolutely no comprehension. God is asking all of us, today: “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him... And showed Him the way of understanding?... To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?... His understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40: 13–14, 18, 25, 28).

We should not try to reason out, exactly, how God does certain things, if He chooses not to reveal this to us. Worse yet, we should not try to disregard or dismiss the awesome understanding which God chooses to reveal to us, just because we cannot comprehend it (compare John 1:5).

God records in His Book of Remembrance people’s trials, deeds, words and thoughts, and He may even write down, in advance, the length of days and other details of certain individuals and even nations, although these can be altered, depending on the circumstances. We will learn much more about the role and function of God’s Book of Remembrance in Chapter 4 of this booklet.

In the next chapter, we will discover more details about God’s awesome power, His understanding and capabilities.

Chapter 3

THE BOOK OF TRUTH

The Bible contains many unconditional prophecies—most of which are for the end-time—to be fulfilled just ahead of us. Many are familiar with the Olivet Prophecy that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples prior to His death. Also, the book of Revelation is a prophecy for our time. The longest cohesive and uninterrupted Old Testament prophecy can be found in the eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel. Biblical scholars understand that that prophecy culminates in end-time events. Some recognize that many verses in the 11th chapter describe historic events that have already come to pass, events that were still future at the time Daniel wrote them down. But very few comprehend the **ASTONISHING FACT** that the entire contents of the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the book of Daniel had been written down by God in a *heavenly book*, long before its contents were even revealed to the ancient prophet Daniel!

When God sent the angel Gabriel to Daniel to reveal to him what would come to pass in the future, Gabriel introduced his revelations with these words: “I will tell you what is noted in the *Scripture of Truth*” (Daniel 10:21). The *New International Version* says: “... in the book of truth.” The *Living Bible* writes: “... in the book of the future.” According to the *Interlinear* translation, the original Hebrew text reads: “I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth.”

A possible reference to the “Book of Truth” can also be found in Isaiah 34:16, where it says: “Search from the *book of the LORD*, and read...” Please also note the “little book” in Revelation 10:2, 10, which is a *heavenly* writing that an angel handed to John to “eat”—to devour its contents so that he could prophesy and relay the contents of that book. It is possible that this “little book” is a part of the heavenly Book of Truth, referred to in Daniel 10.

Die Grosse Bibel includes the following comments about the Book of Truth, as mentioned in Daniel 10:21: “... human history has been written down from beginning to end in a ... document from all eternity.

When the angel says to Daniel that he wants to proclaim to him what is written in this book, he wants to explain that he wants to reveal to him the unalterable decrees of God... Chapter 11 begins with the revelation of the contents of the Book of Truth, in which God has written the fate of individuals and peoples.”

Let us review, in detail, the events which were written in the heavenly Book of Truth, and which the angel revealed to Daniel. Please keep in mind that God had written these events thousands of years before they came, or will come, to pass. And notice how detailed and specific those prophecies are.

PROPHECIES IN DANIEL 11

In Daniel 11:3, we read about a “mighty king” who would “rule with great dominion” over the known ancient world. In another prophecy, the angel identifies this king as the king of Greece (Daniel 8:21). History confirms that this king, to arise after Daniel’s death, was Alexander the Great.

In Daniel 11:4, we read that his kingdom would be “divided toward the four winds of heaven,” or, it would be divided in four parts. History confirms that after Alexander’s death in June of BC 323, four of his generals became rulers over four divisions of Alexander’s Empire. Ptolemy Soter ruled Egypt, part of Syria, and Judea; Seleucus (Nicator) ruled the rest of Syria, Babylonia and the territory east to India; Lysimachus (Nicator) ruled Asia Minor; and Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia.

But the prophecy in Daniel 11 becomes much more specific. Daniel 11:6 tells us that the “daughter of the king of the South” would make an “agreement” with the “king of the North.” History confirms that this prophecy was fulfilled in BC 250. At that time, the king of the South—the king ruling over Egypt—was Ptolemy Philadelphus. His daughter’s name was Bernice. She went to the king of the North—the king ruling over Syria—whose name was Antiochus II Theos. She made a *marriage agreement* with him.

But Daniel 11:6 also tells us that “she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand.” Rather, “she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her [her father], and with him who strengthened her in those

times [her husband].” In fact, when *Bernice’s father died*, her husband Antiochus divorced her and took back his first wife, who, in turn, *murdered Antiochus and Bernice*.

Daniel 11:7 tells us that someone “from the branch of her roots;” i.e., a brother, “shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North... and prevail.” History confirms that in BC 245, Bernice’s brother, with the name of Ptolemy Euergetes III, invaded Syria to avenge the murder of his sister. He won the war and plundered the region.

To hit another truly remarkable highlight in this lengthy prophecy, please note Daniel 11:20: “There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle.”

History tells us that in BC 190, the “king of the North”—at that time Antiochus the Great—died. His son Seleucus IV sent out a tax collector to Judea, whose name was Heliodorus. Seleucus himself only reigned for eleven days (“a few days”), when Heliodorus poisoned him.

Daniel 11:21 continues: “And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.”

History identifies this vile person as Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He took the kingdom by intrigue, or flattery, after he had driven out Heliodorus, the former tax collector. We read that he would fight against “the prince of the covenant” (verse 22). History tells us that he tried to replace the Jewish High Priest. Verse 25 prophesies that he would fight against the king of the South—at that time the king of Egypt—which he did. Verse 28 tells us that “While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land.” History confirms that he massacred many Jews on his way back.

He also desecrated the Temple, abolished the daily sacrifices, and placed an image of a pagan god in the Temple. This happened in BC 167, and was prophesied to happen in Daniel 11:30–31 (“... then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation”).

All of the prophecies recorded in advance in Daniel 11, came to pass precisely as foretold hundreds of years before. And remember, before they were told to Daniel, they had already been written down in God’s heavenly “Book of Truth.”

There can be no doubt that God has decreed, well ahead of time, that certain events would take place. He also identified, well in advance, the individuals who would have a part in these events.

God does have a time schedule. He has determined—predestined—*when* certain events would take place.

PREORDAINED PROPHECIES

Notice in Daniel 11:27, 29, 35, where it shows that certain events would only take place at *appointed* times. Psalm 102:13 says about this future time: “You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, Yes, the *set time*, has come.”

God often operates within a scheduled timetable. He told Jeremiah: “... *After seventy years* are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10; compare Jeremiah 25:11–13).

Also, God clearly has determined—*predestined*—well ahead of prophesied events, what will happen in the future.

Isaiah 42:9 quotes God as saying: “... ‘Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them.’”

Isaiah 46:9–10 adds: “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, *Declaring the end from the beginning*, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.’”

Isaiah 48:5–7 continues: “Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you... I have made you hear new things from this time, Even *hidden* things, and you did not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; and before this day you have not heard them...”

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?

How is this even possible? How could God know thousands of years ago what would happen and what certain men would do?

Part of the answer is revealed in Scriptures such as Ezra 1:1: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, *that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled*, the LORD **stirred up** the spirit of

Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom.”

We find here that God gave a prophecy to Jeremiah, and when the time of fulfillment had arrived, He influenced King Cyrus to act as prophesied. There are numerous examples in the Bible where such a course of action by God is described.

For instance, we read about God’s supernatural intervention to carry out His Will, in Psalm 105:14, 16–17, 23–25: “He *permitted no one* to do them wrong; Yes, He *rebuked* kings for their sakes... Moreover He *called for* a famine in the land; He *destroyed* all the provision of bread. He *sent* a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave... Israel also came into Egypt... He *increased* His people greatly... He *turned their heart to hate* His people, To deal craftily with His servants.”

God had written down future events in His Book of Truth and He brought about circumstances in the lives of people that would bring about those events.

THE SCROLL WITH SEVEN SEALS

The book of Revelation is filled with a description of prophetic events written down in advance; and we should take note of the fact that these events, before they were revealed to John in a vision, *were already written down on heavenly scrolls*. In this regard, please note Revelation 5:1: “I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne *a scroll* written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.” This book, sealed with seven seals, might very well be part of God’s heavenly “Book of Truth.” When Jesus Christ opens the seals, one by one, events, which are written down in the book, begin to unfold before John, in a vision. John saw these future events as if he were watching a movie. And let us notice how precise these events are—many of these events have not taken place even yet. But they will, exactly as described, in the near future.

We read in Revelation 6:8 that when the *fourth* seal is opened, “a fourth of the earth” will be killed “with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.” This is a very precise figure of dead people. God **knew** about the number of deaths more than 2,000 years ago.

Seventh Seal

Note the very specific descriptions in Revelation 8:7–12 when the *seventh* seal of the book is opened and angels appear on the scene to blow the first four trumpets: “... And a *third of the trees* were burned up, and *all green grass* was burned up... and a *third of the sea* became blood. And a *third of the living creatures in the sea* died, and a *third of the ships* were destroyed... A *third of the waters* became wormwood, and many men died from the water... And a *third of the sun* was struck, a *third of the moon*, and a *third of the stars*, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”

Some claim that the numerical references in the Book of Revelation, such as “one-third,” are symbolic. They claim that not really one-third of living creatures in the sea will die. However, God’s numerical references vary, so there is no reason to assume that the term “one-third” is not to be understood literally. Otherwise, why would God say that in one incident, “one-third” of living sea creatures will die, while stating that in a later incident, “all” sea creatures will die (see Revelation 16:3)? This means that God **knew, more than 2,000 years ago**, that in the future, “a third of the living creatures in the sea” would die when a certain event would take place.

When the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, a mighty army will appear on the world scene. We read in Revelation 9:5, 10, that “... they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for *five months*. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man... Their power was to hurt men *five months*.”

Indeed, these are very specific descriptions of future events.

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, “four angels, who had been prepared **for the hour and day and month and year**, were released to kill a third of mankind” (Revelation 9:15). This Scripture tells us plainly that, thousands of years ago, God had decreed (and written down in the Book of Truth) that four angels would kill a third of man at a very clearly designated time. This cannot be argued away.

Verse 16 continues: “Now the number of the army of the horsemen was *two hundred million*; I heard the number of them.” Continuing in verses 18–21: “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone... But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of

their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

We should take note here of several facts: First, God told John almost 2,000 years ago that just prior to Christ’s return, *an army of two hundred million would kill a third of mankind*. But God also knew that the rest of mankind who would survive that attack *would NOT repent*. This is remarkable, as in another situation, man *WILL* repent (compare Revelation 11:13). So God knew when some would repent and when most would not. How does God know when some will repent? We can answer this question in part: Because it is GOD who grants us repentance (Romans 2:4)—so He knew in advance to whom He would offer the gift of repentance at a certain time. What escapes human understanding is the fact that, in addition to knowing when to offer the gift of repentance to some, God also knew in advance who would *accept* His gift.

Two Witnesses

We also read that Two Witnesses will preach for 1,260 days, or 3½ years, and that Gentiles will occupy Jerusalem for 42 months; that is, for the same time period (Revelation 11:2–3). This, too, has been *predestined*. Then, we are told that the Two Witnesses will be killed (verse 7), and that “those who dwell on the earth will rejoice..., make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth” (verse 10). However, after 3½ days, God will resurrect the Two Witnesses, and they will ascend “to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven” (verses 12–13).

Now we learn that some will repent when they see these things happening. But just 3½ days before, they were rejoicing over the murder of the Two Witnesses. And God had written all of this in His heavenly Book of Truth thousands of years ago.

Another very specific prophecy can be found in Revelation 14:20, when Christ returns and fights against those who want to fight Him.

We read: “And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.” The word “furlongs” describes “stadia.” The place that will be covered with the blood of slain soldiers will be about 184 miles long. God wrote even this figure down well in advance of the actual events.

When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, seven bowls of the wrath of God will be poured out on this earth. Again, we are very clearly told what will happen at that time. For instance, *every living creature in the sea* will die (Revelation 16:3). Men will be scorched with great heat, and they will *not* repent, but blaspheme God (verse 9). When darkness will descend upon the kingdom of the “beast,” people won’t repent either, but they will curse God instead (verses 10–11).

Finally, when the greatest earthquake in the history of man will destroy many cities (verses 18–19), and when great hail from heaven will fall upon men, they won’t repent at that time, either (verse 21).

Seven Eras of the Church

In addition, God outlines the history of the New Testament Church in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, pointing out, among other things, that there would be seven eras. In one of the eras, Satan would throw the Christians into jail for “ten days.” God also describes the predominant characteristics of the Christians in each of those eras, well in advance of their existence (compare chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation). In subsequent chapters of the book of Revelation, God outlines the history of the false church, and of the political system which it will rule, pointing out that the Roman Empire would be resurrected ten times, and that the false church would direct seven of those resurrections. Further, as we have discussed, both a religious leader and a political leader are clearly identified who will fight against the returning Christ, while two Christian leaders, the Two Witnesses, will prophesy for exactly 1,260 days, before they will be killed by the political leader in the city of Jerusalem.

God knew all of this in advance. It is *predestined* to happen. These prophecies are written down in God’s heavenly Book of Truth—as well as in the Holy Bible—and they are certain to occur.

The Bible mentions additional heavenly books or scrolls, which

include certain prophecies (note, for instance, Ezekiel 2:9; 3:1; and Zechariah 5:1–3). It is likely that these scrolls are all part of God’s heavenly Book of Truth.

TOO HARD TO BELIEVE?

When we consider all of the things that God knows ahead of time, why would it be so fantastic or illogical to believe that He knew *us*, too, before we were born?

Let us consider what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:7: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained [predetermined or predestined] *before the ages* for our glory.”

Paul also states in 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God *from the beginning chose you* for salvation, through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth, to which He *called you* by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And so, we can confidently believe that God does watch us today and He does want us to make it into His Kingdom. Predestination, when applied to us, has to do with the *timing* of our calling to salvation. But once truly called, God does not forsake us (compare John 6:37–40; Philippians 1:6). Rather, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand [or, *predestined*] that we should walk in them.”

Let us conclude this chapter with the following encouraging words from our great God and Savior: “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.’... Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it” (Isaiah 46:9–11).

Chapter 4

“...BOOKS WERE OPENED...”

We have discussed so far, in the context of predestination, some of God’s heavenly books.

We saw the existence of the *Book of Life*, in which the names of those are written who have been called to salvation in this day and age, prior to Christ’s return. The *Book of Life* records the names of those who are to inherit eternal life. We also saw the existence of another book, *The Book of Remembrance*. Then we learned that God has a book called the *Book of Truth*, in which He wrote down certain events, long before they actually come to pass.

We will now discuss the fact that, based on how people conduct their lives, they will receive a particular reward.

How does God deal with our sins? Do our sins have a connection with any of God’s heavenly books? How do our sins relate to the concept of predestination? And what about all the people who were not called to salvation in this lifetime? How does God judge them?

We know that those who have not been called to salvation in this lifetime and have died prior to Christ’s return will be resurrected, to physical life, in the Second Resurrection—also called the Great White Throne Judgment period. As we saw, the *Book of Life* will be opened to them at that time. Their names had not been written in the *Book of Life* before. *Only the names of those predestined to be called to salvation in this day and age had already been written in the Book of Life.* The *Book of Life* will be opened for them at the time of their resurrection to physical life. Their names CAN, at that time, be written in the *Book of Life*.

However, the *Book of Life* is not the only book that will be opened. The Bible tells us that other books will be opened, too. What are those other books? Do they have any relevance to sins? And will those books only exist for those who will live in the future, or do they already exist for us today?

Let us notice the following interesting passage in Daniel 7:9–10: “I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was

seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, *AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED.*”

Which books were these?

Moffat translates: “... the court was held and the *records* were opened.”

From the context, this passage in Daniel seems to be referring to the time of Christ’s return. At that time, a court will be in session and books will be opened.

A similar statement, which describes events 1,000 years *after* Christ’s return, can be found in Revelation 20:11–12. It refers to those who will be resurrected to physical life during the Great White Throne Judgment period. We read: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away... and I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and *BOOKS WERE OPENED*. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things *WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS.*”

What are those books?

This passage *could* refer to the books of the Bible. Certainly, we will be judged by the standards as revealed in God’s Holy Word, the Bible. But, there is another possibility as to what these books might refer to.

Let us note how other translations render this passage in Revelation 20.

The *New International Version* says: “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

The *New Revised Standard Version* reads: “And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books.”

The *New English Bible* renders the phrase in this way: “The dead were judged by what they had done, as recorded in these books.”

In light of these different translations, all of which seem to suggest that **man’s deeds are written down in books**, and that **man is judged based on those deeds**, we are reminded of what we already know about the “Book of Remembrance.”

The German Commentary *Rienecker* points out: “We also hear about... books. According to their contents, judgment will occur at the last day... People will be judged according to their works. In God’s

judicial records, the books, *everything is written down that a human has thought, said and done*. Everything will become manifest. There is only one possibility to escape sentence and become pronounced, not guilty. Their names must be written down in the other book, the Book of Life.”

Halley's Bible Handbook states: “Every deed and motive will have been recorded... The ‘Books’ will have the records of men’s lives.”

The Commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* explains that the books, mentioned in Revelation 20, are “...the books of God’s remembrance, alike of the evil and of the good... Besides the general book recording the works of all, there is a special book for believers in which their names are written... the Lamb’s book of life.”

Adam Clarke comments: “All the actions of men, whether good or bad, are written in a book, and of all they shall give account.”

Herbert W. Armstrong, the late human leader of the Church of God, stated during a sermon in 1984 that the books to be opened include the good and the bad works which *had been* written down, specifically mentioning Matthew 12:36–37 in that context.

Taking Daniel 7 and Revelation 20 together, it appears that this process of having to give account for one’s recorded deeds, whether good or bad, applies to *EVERYONE*. It applies to those who are called now to salvation *AND* to those who will be called later. It applies to converted Christians in this life, as well as to those who will be resurrected in the Second Resurrection.

How can this be?

Let us note, first of all, how God describes the judgment of those who are called prior to Christ’s Second Coming.

HOW CONVERTED CHRISTIANS ARE JUDGED

In Romans 14:10–13, we read Paul’s warning to converted Christians: “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For *we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*... So then *each of us shall give account* of himself to God.”

Paul speaks in future terms. All of us *SHALL* stand—sometime in the future—before the judgment seat of Christ, and all of us *SHALL* give account of what we have done in this life. Now notice 2 Corinthians 5:10: “For *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, that each one may receive the things done in the body,

according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Recall the passages from Malachi 3:16 and Psalm 56:8, that the things which we did, said or thought were written in the *Book of Remembrance*. Visualize, if you will, that when you stand before Christ, He will have that particular book open in front of Him and, based on what is written there, He will judge you.

Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:13–14 confirms this: “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth... But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment... Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring *every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.*”

As we said earlier, this judgment is not limited to converted Christians. Paul explains in the second chapter of the book of Romans that Gentiles will also be judged on their actions, words and thoughts, when their time of judgment has come. We read of their judgment, which mainly takes place during the time of the Great White Throne Judgment period: “For as many as have sinned without [the knowledge of the] law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law... *in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*” (Romans 2:12, 16).

EVERYONE will be judged! Hebrews 9:27 tells us that it is appointed to man once to die, and *afterwards the judgment*. It is true, of course, that judgment has already *begun* for the house of God—His Church (1 Peter 4:17). But it has not been completed yet. There is still a judgment coming for everyone *after death*—including the house of God (1 Corinthians 4:5).

For converted Christians, this coming judgment after death will not deal with the question of eternal life or death. Those who die in Christ will not be judged as to whether they will inherit eternal life, as they will not see eternal death (John 5:24, 28–29). However, their judgment or accounting has to do with their **reward** (compare Luke 19:13, 15–19). And their reward will depend on what they did in their lives with the “talents” bestowed upon them by God’s Holy Spirit (compare Matthew 25:14–23).

True Christians who died in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life at the time of His Second Coming, but they, too, even though immortal spirit beings by then, will still have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their **reward**. We are told in Matthew 25:19 that

“the lord of those servants [Christ] came and *settled account* with them.” And He will say to those who used the gift of the Holy Spirit within them to overcome their problems: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you *ruler over many things*. Enter into the joy of your lord” (verse 21).

The opposite is also true; that is, we will also have to give account for the *bad things* which we did—things which prevented us from overcoming as much as we should have. We read in Matthew 12:36–37: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will *give account of it in the day of judgment*. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Because we all have failed in many ways, especially with our tongue (compare James 3:1–2), is there, then, any hope for us? Sins that we do not repent of, will remain in Christ’s Book of Remembrance. However, the Bible tells us that our sins CAN BE eradicated from God’s heavenly record. How can we make sure that those sins will be erased?

HOW SINS ARE ERASED

Paul explains the entire process in Hebrews 4:11–16: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of *Him to whom we must give account*. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

God’s mercy includes forgiveness for our sins if we go to Him and seek it. 1 John 1:8–9 tells us: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

God will hear our prayers when we come boldly before His throne of mercy, in a repentant frame of mind, confessing our sins to Him and asking Him for forgiveness by pointing out that Jesus Christ has already paid with His blood for our penalty, which is eternal death.

What happens next?

Colossians 2:13–14 tells us: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having *forgiven you* all trespasses, having **wiped out** the handwriting of requirements that was against us [that is, *the record of our sins*], and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

The *New International Version* says that Christ was “*erasing the record that stood against us.*” *Die Grosse Bibel* says: “He has *crossed out* the record of indebtedness, which was against us, and has abolished its demands against us [that is, our eternal death].”

When our sins are forgiven, they are “wiped out,” “erased,” or “crossed out.” Acts 3:19 tells us: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be **blotted out.**”

This phrase, “blotted out,” is quite remarkable. As we will recall, Christ said in Revelation 3:5 that He will not “blot out” the names of true Christians from the *Book of Life*, as long as they stay faithful to Him. The same term, “blot out,” is used in Exodus 32:32–33, where God says that He will “blot out” the unrepentant sinner from His *Book of Life*. By contrast, we are told in Acts 3:19 that God *will blot out* our recorded SINS from His *Book of Remembrance* WHEN WE REPENT and obtain mercy from Him to forgive our sins.

We find this fact confirmed in Isaiah 43:25: “I, even I, am He who **blots out your transgressions** for My own sake....” This promise is repeated in Jeremiah 50:20: “In those days and in that time,’ says the LORD, ‘the iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; For I will pardon those whom I preserve.”

When God forgives our sins, He erases them from His Book of Remembrance. Even if someone was to look for them in that Book, they could not be found. Not only does God erase them from His written records, He also erases them from His very mind. We read in Jeremiah 31:34: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin *I will remember no more.*”

On the other hand, when sins are not repented of, they will stay in God’s records AND they will be retained in God’s memory. They will not be blotted out. Nehemiah 4:5 tells us: “Do **not cover** their iniquity, and do not let their sin be **blotted out** from before You...”

The use of the term “cover” in “cover their iniquity” is also interesting.

Paul uses this term as well, in Romans 4:7, where he states, quoting from David's writings in the Psalms: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and **whose sins are covered.**"

How are our sins covered? The phraseology implies that Christ's blood "covers" them, since it is through Christ's shed blood that we can obtain forgiveness of sins. It gives the impression that one could not read the recorded sins any more because Christ's blood "covers" them.

HOW TO OVERCOME SATAN

Taking all of these concepts and putting them together, we are able to understand better an interesting passage in the 12th chapter of the book of Revelation. We are first told that Satan, "the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down" (verse 10). The passage continues in verse 11: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

WHAT were Satan's accusations? That the brethren had sinned.

HOW did they overcome Satan's accusations "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony"? They overcame Satan by confessing their sins to God ("by the word of their testimony") and by asking for forgiveness for their sins, claiming Christ's Sacrifice as sufficient payment ("by the blood of the Lamb"). And as Satan was accusing them "day and night," so they prayed "day and night" for forgiveness (compare Luke 18:7).

WHY did God forgive them their sins? Because they were sincere and **TRULY REPENTANT**, as evidenced by the fact that they were willing to give up everything for God, including their physical lives, if necessary ("they did not love their lives to the death").

Satan's accusations were rejected because there remained no sin. The sins had been **blotted out** or **erased** from God's heavenly Book of Remembrance. They had been **covered** by the blood of the Lamb. Satan had no longer a reason to accuse the brethren. There was no more "evidence" of wrongdoing, so to speak, because it had been erased from the heavenly record, by God Himself.

All that remained in the Book of Remembrance were the good deeds and thoughts of the individual Christian. That is why we need to make sure today that we come to God's throne of mercy in times of need for

forgiveness, so that our sins can be forgiven, and erased and forgotten by God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are *ALWAYS* willing to forgive us our sins, upon sincere repentance and willingness to change our ways. Only the “unpardonable sin” won’t be forgiven (see chapter 5).

When the multitudes of people are resurrected during the Great White Throne Judgment period to be taught God’s Word and confronted with their recorded sins, most will deeply repent of what they

Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen

The Bible teaches that in this day and age, God calls just very few to salvation. Those who respond to the call and become converted are referred to as the firstfruits (compare James 1:18; Revelation 14:4). Some try to defeat the Biblical concept of predestination, as explained in this booklet, by stating that God does not know ahead of time whom He will call and chose. Rather, they claim that God “calls” many, based on their prior conduct in this life, and that He *then decides* to choose or accept those who respond to His call, while rejecting those who reject His call.

However, those who are *truly* called today have been first fore-known and predestined by God (Romans 8:28). They were singled out BEFORE they did right or wrong—that is, they were NOT called because of their works (compare Romans 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:8–9). Those who are *truly* called are also chosen and faithful (compare Revelation 17:14). The Bible does not teach that God calls many today to salvation, but that most reject their calling and that only a few will respond and become chosen and faithful. If that were true, then those who have rejected their spiritual calling to eternal salvation would have committed the unpardonable sin—and this is decisively not correct. To-

day, God only *calls and chooses* the few (compare 1 Corinthians 1:26–29), and when He brings them to *true conversion*, they, for the most part, will stay loyal to Him (although it is possible, that some, who are *truly* called to salvation, will commit the unpardonable sin).

It is correct, of course, that God’s election process *begins* with our calling, but it does not end there (2 Peter 1:10). Those who are called by God and whose names are written in God’s Book of Life are God’s “*chosen*” generation or people (1 Peter 2:9; Acts 9:15; James 2:5). They are “the elect” or “chosen ones” (Matthew 24:24, 31). We read in Ephesians 1:3–5 that “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... chose us in Him before the foundation of the world... having predestined us... as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself.”

We also read in 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God *from the beginning chose* you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He **called** you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When the Bible talks about the *predestination* of those truly “called”

had done. They will then obtain forgiveness, and their sins will be blotted out from the heavenly records, just as ours are today and the sins of those yet to be called before the Great White Throne Judgment period. The Book of Life will be opened to them, and after a certain period of time of living in the flesh and overcoming their carnal natures and evil habits, they, too, will be able to reach their potential—inheritance of eternal life in the Kingdom or Family of God.

to salvation in this day and age, it *includes the concept* that they are also “chosen” to be numbered among the “elect.”

Christ says in John 15:16, 19: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain... I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” God *calls us* into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12). We are also told: “He who *calls you* is faithful, who also WILL DO it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). We are “*the called of Jesus Christ*”—the “saints” (Romans 1:6, 7; 8:28). Jude 1 refers to us as “those who are *called*, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” In Hebrews 3:1, we are referred to as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly *calling*.” And 2 Peter 1:10 admonishes God’s true disciples “to make your *call and election* sure.” At the same time, we read in Mark 13:20 about the coming Great Tribulation: “And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the *elect’s sake, whom He chose*, He shortened the days.”

We see that those who are truly “called” to salvation are also referred to as the “chosen ones,” or “the elect.”

What, then, did Christ mean

when He said that many are called, but few are chosen (compare Matthew 20:16; 22:14)?

As any word study will show, and as we explain in this booklet, the Bible uses the word “called” in many different ways. Some were called by God for a particular purpose—but not for salvation. For instance, in Matthew 22:14, the concept of “being called” has the meaning of being invited to the wedding (compare verse 3). But the parable is not limited to those called to eternal salvation, nor does the parable refer to those invited to the wedding as the bride or the “wife” of the Lamb (as is the case in Revelation 19:7). Rather, the ones invited were “guests.” The guests, mentioned in verses 3 to 8, seem to describe Old Testament Israel—the physical descendants of Abraham—as well as the religious leadership at the time of Christ’s First Coming. We need to understand that Old Testament Israel was never offered eternal salvation. Still, the Bible says that they were all called to the wedding (compare Luke 13:34); but not in the sense that they were “called” to eternal salvation—just as “guests.” They were called, on a physical level, to have a relationship with God, but they even rejected that kind of a relationship (compare Matthew 21:33–46, especially verses 43

continued . . .

and 45, clarifying that Christ was speaking of the Pharisees and chief priests). Luke 13:34 reveals that Christ wanted often to gather the children of Jerusalem together, but they were unwilling, rather choosing to kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to them.

Please also note Matthew 8:11–12: “And I say to you that many will come from east to west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Christ is addressing here the Pharisees and chief priests, calling them the “sons of the kingdom.” But they were never called to salvation. The fact that they will be cast into outer darkness does not mean that they have committed the unpardonable sin. It means, however, that they will not enter the kingdom of God at Christ’s First Coming (compare the parallel passage in Luke 13:28–30, showing that they, who thought that they would be “first” in the kingdom, will actually be “last.” They will still get their chance to qualify at a later time, as discussed in this booklet).

In that sense, many, including the modern houses of Israel and Judah, are “called” to a physical relationship with God, but few are chosen today to have a spiritual relationship with God that leads to eternal life.

In Matthew 20:16, the context of Christ’s words, that many are called, but few are chosen, is one of different functions and offices in the Church and potentially in God’s Kingdom. While all converted Christians have been *called* by God to

salvation, not every one in the Church has the same office or function. Some are *chosen* to have different functions. Some are chosen to be apostles, evangelists, pastors, elders or deacons, while others have not been chosen to such functions. Also, insofar as the future is concerned, some who were only called and chosen a few years prior to their death, might have a higher position in the Kingdom of God than some who “grew up in the Church” and stayed in the Church throughout their lives.

None of this takes away from the truth that God has foreknown and predestined those whom He truly calls to salvation in this day and age. In the parable with the sower, in Matthew 13:18–23, four types of people are mentioned who all hear the Word of God. But only one person accepts the Word and produces fruit (verse 23), while the other three give up and fall away. Does this mean that all of them were truly called by God to salvation? And—that God was caught by surprise when the first three fell away, although He had predestined them to be called in this day and age? Hardly! God very well knew that only the fourth person would respond and continue in His calling, as God knows the hearts and minds of people. Only the fourth person was predestined to be *called and chosen* in this life.

When God predestined to truly call someone to eternal salvation in this life, He also predestined to choose him, expecting that he will remain faithful. Many, though, who may think that they are called by God to salvation, are not truly called at all (Matthew 7:21–23; Matthew 15:13).

Chapter 5

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

All of us have heard of the unpardonable sin, but when it comes to conveying a true explanation of what it is, few have a correct understanding.

Orthodox Christianity, in their attempt to strike fear in the hearts of their followers, have explained that those who commit it will live eternally in hell fire, having to suffer the never-ending pain of torture and punishment. The screams of those who are supposedly now in hell are rising to high heaven in agony and desperation—but high heaven does not hear them, because those “saved souls,” supposedly in heaven, have lost all memory of the existence of those unfortunate souls suffering in hell. That’s how orthodox Christianity—especially Protestantism—gets around the nagging question of how the “saved” could be living in bliss and happiness while hearing their loved ones being tortured forever and ever in hell.

Roman Catholicism has offered another “way out,” teaching that those “souls” who are supposedly in purgatory or hell can be freed if enough prayers are offered to God by those behind here on earth, IF they do it often and continuously for many, many years. So, masses are being held for the dead, to keep alive the memory of their suffering in hell. At the same time, we have not heard of any faithful Catholic who did not go to heaven at the time of his or her death, according to the words of the priests at the funeral. Catholicism has failed to explain that obvious paradox, just as they have failed to explain how a dead person can sleep the eternal sleep, while at the same time going to heaven; and why there should be a resurrection at the time of Christ’s coming, when the soul is already living in heaven in bliss, splendor and happiness. In any event, none of this would be true for those who have committed the unpardonable sin. According to Catholicism, they are doomed to stay in hell forever and ever.

Protestantism, especially so-called Fundamentalism, not believing in a purgatory or a limbo, teaches that everyone who has not accepted

Jesus Christ in this life has committed the unpardonable sin, and is doomed to never-ending tortures in hellfire. Roman Catholicism is more “flexible,” allowing for a purgatory, but they too, seem to teach that one must accept the Trinity, Jesus Christ, and most importantly, it seems, the Virgin Mary in this life in order to escape the tortures of hell.

Some modern movements even claim that there is no unpardonable sin at all. They say that EVERY human being will be saved and given eternal life, without exception.

The Bible, though, does not teach any of the above. According to God’s written Word, man does not go to heaven when he dies, nor does man have an immortal soul. In fact, God says that man IS a *mortal* soul (Genesis 2:7, *Authorized Version*; Ezekiel 18:4). Man sleeps a “sleep” of death—without consciousness—awaiting the resurrection from the dead. There is no purgatory, no hell as taught by Orthodox Christianity and no mandatory requirement for every human being today to accept Christ in this life. In fact, most people were *not predestined* to be called to salvation today to God’s Way of life. They will get their chance later, during the Millennium (if still alive by then) or (for those who died previously) during the time period of the Great White Throne Judgment, a Biblical concept that eludes orthodox Christianity.

There does exist such a thing as the unpardonable sin, which will bring about eternal death. John tells us in 1 John 5:16–17: “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. *There is sin leading to death.* I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.”

The penalty for *each* sin—regardless of the “degree”—is death (Romans 6:23). That means, even a sin like drunkenness is incurring the death penalty (compare 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:19–21). But when we repent of our sins, we receive forgiveness—that is, the death penalty is removed. The sin not leading to death is sin that is repented of. *The sin leading to death is the unpardonable sin*—sin that the sinner *cannot* repent of, because he does **not want to repent!** The Bible teaches that those who commit the unpardonable sin will be destroyed. They won’t suffer forever and ever in hell fire, but hell fire—*gehenna* in Greek—will burn them up, quickly, within a few seconds. Their fate is eternal punishment, that is, punishment with eternal consequences, not

continual eternal punishing. They will cease to exist and it will be as if they had never lived! They will become ashes; they will be totally burned up within a short moment of time (For more information and proof, please read our free booklet, “*Do We Have An Immortal Soul?*”).

Even though the punishment is by no means as terrible as depicted in Orthodox Christianity, it is still bad. After all, those people will be deprived of living as God beings forever and ever with God the Father and Jesus Christ, dwelling in complete harmony and happiness, leading productive lives that are fully satisfying. No one should be happy about the fate of those who commit the unpardonable sin, and we should avoid it at all costs!

So, then, what is this sin, exactly, and how do we commit it?

The unpardonable sin can be *any sin* we commit, *IF* it reflects our deliberate, malicious, predetermined, willful and hateful decision to rebel against God, thus manifesting a way of life that is in malicious opposition to God’s Truth—the Truth which had clearly been understood, accepted and embraced, but subsequently rejected. It is sin that cannot be repented of, because the sinner committing the sin **does not want to repent of it!** He has determined that he does not want to be obedient to God, that he hates God and His way of life! Satan is the prime example of someone who committed the unpardonable sin. He has become God’s implacable enemy, hating everything God stands for, willing to fight against God to overthrow His rule and His government. He is the destroyer—the wicked evil prince of this world!

This means that not every sin is the unpardonable sin. As we read earlier, there is sin *not leading to* eternal death. We ALL sin—and the penalty for sin is eternal death. But we can be *saved from* eternal death, when we repent of our sins and accept the Sacrifice of Christ to obtain forgiveness. There is no one who does not sin. But when we sin and subsequently come to our senses, we are to repent of the sin, wishing we had not done it and wanting to go the other way, wishing never to do it again. We still love God and His Way, and we do not hate God for telling us not to commit a certain sin! God’s forgiveness is not license to continue in sin, to be sure—but upon *genuine repentance*, we can obtain forgiveness for our sins.

This is a totally different mindset than the one Satan has.

BUT, Satan’s mindset did not start with his hateful rebellious

attitude that he has today. He *ACQUIRED* that mindset, a mindset that started with just *ONE* sin—the sin of pride (compare Ezekiel 28:17)! He did not repent of this one sin, which, in turn, led to additional sins, until his *WHOLE ATTITUDE BECAME ONE OF HATRED TOWARD GOD!*

HOW IT BEGINS...

In Romans 1, Paul explains how persons can commit the unpardonable sin. Although Paul speaks here in general terms about Gentiles who had *some* realization of God's existence, this passage can be applied to God's true disciples.

First of all, they must know God (Romans 1:21). They also know God's righteous judgment (verse 32), but they neglect to glorify God (verse 21). So we see that the unpardonable sin *BEGINS* with neglect. If not repented of, this neglect to glorify God will lead to additional problems. And so, after they neglect to glorify God, they neglect, as a consequence, to give God thanks (verse 21).

Such constant neglect will lead to a certain attitude. We read that they become futile in their thoughts (verse 21) and that their foolish hearts are darkened (verse 21).

When this happens, and when this attitude is not repented of, one is in grave danger. Romans 1:25 goes on to describe people who are “changing the truth of God into a lie,” or, they exchange the truth of God for the lie.

Romans 1:28 continues to show that people do not like even to “retain God in their knowledge,” so that, finally, as verse 30 brings out, they become *HATERS* of God. Now they have completely and finally rejected God, His Way, His authority over their lives; they have now decided, with willful hate and malice, to live a life according to their own values and standards, contrary to God's commandments, which had been clearly understood and originally joyfully accepted. They have made the irrevocable decision *NOT* to repent of their conduct and their hate for God and His values, and it all started with neglect to do what is right.

HEBREWS 6:4–6

Let us notice how the Bible describes and defines the unpardonable sin in various Scriptures.

Hebrews 6:4–6 tells us: “For it is *impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, *to renew them again to repentance*, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”

Note how the unpardonable sin is being committed: People fall away. It says, literally, that they “commit apostasy.” They were once enlightened; they had tasted the heavenly gift; they had become partakers of the Holy Spirit; they had tasted the good word of God; and they had tasted the powers of the age to come.

For those, it is impossible to renew them AGAIN to repentance, if they fall away. They HAD repented, but now, they have reached the stage where THEY don’t want to repent anymore. They don’t want to accept *Christ’s sacrifice* for the forgiveness of their sins anymore. Repentance is a gift from God, but we must accept it. If we don’t accept it, God does not force it upon us. So it seems to START with sluggishness, laziness, indifference (compare verses 11 and 12). It ENDS with the impossibility to repent, because that person *does not want to repent anymore*. Paul is clearly talking about people in the Church—people who, at one time, HAD God’s Spirit dwelling within them.

HEBREWS 10:26–29

Hebrews 10:26–29 tells us: “For if we *sin willfully* after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries... Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”

Notice again how the unpardonable sin is committed. People *sin willfully* AFTER they have received the KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH! They trample the Son of God under foot; they count the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified—set aside for a holy purpose—a common thing; and they insult the Holy Spirit of grace! They do not want to repent AGAIN and accept the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Therefore, for them, no further sacrifice is possible.

Again, we see that this refers to God's people in the Church—those who had God's Spirit dwelling within them, but they rejected it and therefore lost God's Spirit. This is a sobering thing to realize.

Paul is giving certain warnings as to how to *AVOID* the possibility of committing the unpardonable sin, such as: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (verse 25); not casting away our confidence (verse 35); and not drawing back to perdition (verse 39). Rather, he encourages us to do these things: *to appear before God in prayer with boldness, being confident that He hears and answers our prayers* (verse 19); *to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering* (verse 23); *to stir up one another in love* (verse 24); *to remember the time when we were first called* (verse 32); *and to believe to the saving of the soul* (verse 39).

2 PETER 2:18–21

Another passage addressing the concept of the unpardonable sin is found in 2 Peter 2:18–21: “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, *after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

This passage addresses first and foremost false teachers or ministers, who teach blasphemies in the Church. They had *escaped* the pollutions of this world THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. They HAD God's Spirit at one time—the Spirit that gave them such knowledge—but they rejected it, being first entangled and then overcome AGAIN by the pollutions of this world!

Peter is saying here that it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, because then they would still have a chance at a later time to be called by God. They KNEW the truth, but, unfortunately, REJECTED it and turned away from the holy

commandment delivered, entrusted and revealed to them. This passage shows exactly *HOW* people committed the unpardonable sin—they **KNEW** and **UNDERSTOOD** God’s Way of life, lived it for a while, thereby experiencing the powers of the world to come, but then walked away from it, for good.

MATTHEW 12:31–32

Let us now notice Christ’s warning to the Pharisees, in Matthew 12:31–32: “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the *blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit will not be forgiven men... either in this age or in the age to come.*”

Christ warned them that one does not receive forgiveness if he blasphemes the Holy Spirit (compare also Mark 3:28–29). What did He mean by that?

We need to note the context in which this is conveyed. Christ had cast out demons by the power of God (verses 22–23, 28). The Pharisees knew that. The Pharisee Nicodemus had told Christ in John 3:2: “Rabbi, we [Pharisees] know that You are a teacher come from God; *for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.*” But they were envious of Christ (compare Matthew 27:18), and so they told the people that Christ was casting out demons with the help of Satan (compare Matthew 12:24). They knew this was a lie! They knew that in saying this, they were blaspheming or rejecting the power of God’s Holy Spirit—the only power that can convert us and create in us a better heart.

Christ was addressing a couple of issues here. He warned the Pharisees that they would be judged based on their words (verses 36–37). He also warned them that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—the deliberate, intentional, hateful and malicious denial and rejection of the working of the Holy Spirit of God—would not be forgiven. The reason is clear: if someone **REJECTS THE GIFT** of the Holy Spirit, which alone can bring about repentance and conversion, then God is not going to force His gift on anyone.

The *Nelson Study Bible* comments: “The sin which will not be forgiven is the stubborn refusal to heed the Holy Spirit’s conviction and accept the forgiveness that Christ offers.”

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* explains: “They looked upon an obvious work of God and called it the work of Satan. Their problem

was not one of the head but of the heart. This was willful blindness... By willful rejection of God's Spirit one denies himself his only help toward repentance and faith... Jesus is not saying that God is ever unwilling to forgive but that man can render himself unforgivable. This has to do with a condition in man..."

The *New Bible Commentary Revised* points out: "The blasphemy against the spirit ... will not be forgiven because those who persist in it are putting themselves in a position where they cannot receive forgiveness."

Note, though, that Christ was not telling the Pharisees that they HAD committed the unpardonable sin. He was warning them that they could reach that point, if they were to continue in their hateful rejection of Christ and God the Father.

We should also note that in Mark 3:22, the scribes, not just the Pharisees, accused Christ of casting out demons with the help of Satan.

So the scribes, too, although they knew better, charged Christ with being demon-possessed, and thus rejected the power of the Holy Spirit of God—dwelling within Christ—through which He was able to work these mighty miracles (compare Acts 10:38). They too, were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin (compare Mark 3:28–30). Christ was telling them, in effect: If you continue with that course of action of resisting God and refusing to repent, then you might reach a point when it will become impossible for you to repent. You will then have made the final, irrevocable decision never to repent and to change. Such an attitude will lead to hate and resentment for God and His ways.

Some of the scribes and Pharisees might have been brought to repentance. We read in Acts 6:7 that "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Although it is possible that one can commit the unpardonable sin without ever having had God's Holy Spirit within him, it is highly unlikely. To come to the point of committing the unpardonable sin, a person must first know full well that God is working in his or her life, but then he or she eventually comes to the point of maliciously and hatefully rejecting God, not just in a moment of despair, hate or anger, but in a continual, irrevocable course of action. A person in such a situation blasphemes the power of the Holy Spirit by fully and totally rejecting it, *knowing* that he or she is rejecting GOD.

The key is that such persons cannot repent, because they *do not want to repent!* They have *understood* what is being offered them, but they have—in hate and with malice—rejected God’s offer, for all of eternity. They will NEVER have another opportunity!

DID THEY DO IT?

We see that it is normally only possible to commit the unpardonable sin when someone has received God’s Holy Spirit within him. Based on these findings, we can reach certain conclusions (although it is God, of course, who is the Judge of all, and not man):

Adam and Eve did not commit the unpardonable sin. They had not received God’s Holy Spirit within them. They had not developed an attitude of hatred and malice against God’s Way of life. They sinned in weakness, but not with malice.

Judas Iscariot did not commit the unpardonable sin. God never *called* him to *salvation* at his time; rather, he was *called and chosen* by God to fulfill the predetermined *purpose* to betray Christ (compare John 6:70–71). Christ knew from the beginning who it would be who would betray Him. But we also notice that when Judas realized what he had done, he was remorseful and tried to undo the damage. When that failed, he hanged himself in despair—even that was preordained. Although we don’t see here Godly repentance, since God did not offer him Godly repentance at that time, we see human remorse and anguish. We do not see hate and malice toward God, so we cannot conclude that Judas committed the unpardonable sin. It is true, of course, that Christ said that it would have been good for Judas if he had not been born (compare Matthew 26:24). God knew ahead of time that Judas would **want** to betray Christ, and that Judas would have to live with that memory. But Christ’s words cannot be interpreted to mean that Judas committed the unpardonable sin.

The beast and the false prophet will not commit the unpardonable sin, either, when Christ returns. Again, they are preordained or called to fulfill a certain role in prophetic events—as ancient Pharaoh was—but they will not be called to salvation at that time and they will not receive God’s Holy Spirit. They will be deceived by Satan and, in all likelihood, will be demonically possessed, but they will not fully and totally know what they are doing. When Christ throws them into a lake

of fire at the *BEGINNING* of the MILLENNIUM, that will only be a forerunner of the lake of fire *AFTER* the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment. Only those who will be thrown into *THAT* final lake of fire—after the Second Resurrection—will have committed the unpardonable sin.

From all what we can see in the Bible, even leaders such as Hitler, Mussolini, Napoleon, Charles the Great, Alexander the Great or Caesar will be resurrected in the Great White Throne Judgment, and their *first* chance to accept Christ will be offered to them at that time. Then, of course, it will be their decision to accept or reject the offer—the same choice true Christians are being given today.

Did **Solomon** commit the unpardonable sin? We don't know for sure. What we do know is that he had God's Holy Spirit within him but that he forsook God's way of life, being misled by his many foreign pagan wives. What we don't know is whether or not he repented. The fact that he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes might suggest that he did repent at the end of his life. After all, he says at the very end of the book, "Fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). That would be a strange saying by someone who has committed the unpardonable sin; that is, by someone who has rejected, with hate and malice, God and His commandments.

It appears that **King Saul** may have committed the unpardonable sin. He clearly had God's Spirit within him, but he lost the Spirit, and was plagued by a demon instead. There is nothing mentioned in the Bible that King Saul ever repented. Rather, at the very end of his life, he consulted a witch, rather than repenting and turning to God.

As mentioned before, one being who has clearly committed the unpardonable sin, is **Satan the devil**. Having been created an archangel and cherub with the name of Lucifer—the *Lightbringer*—he became God's adversary and the prince of *darkness*. Filled with hate, malice and anger for God, he has decided *NEVER* to repent of his evil ways! Therefore, he cannot repent! He is doomed forever.

Did **Esau** commit the unpardonable sin? Some have implied that he did, by quoting the following passage in Hebrews 12:14–17: "(14) Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: (15) looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this

many become defiled; (16) lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. (17) For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

In quoting the Scripture above, some have implied that we can commit the unpardonable sin merely by neglect and lapse of time, even though we are willing to repent and even though we *want* repentance and forgiveness. But is that what Hebrews 12:14–17 is saying?

The Scripture contains clearly a warning to be diligent about following God’s way of life. Paul warns us not to allow bitterness to overtake us, as it can trouble others and ourselves. He warns us to make sure that we are not behaving like the profane or godless person Esau, who did not cherish his birthright, and who was rejected when he wanted the blessing. All of this is clear. This does not say, however, that ESAU committed the unpardonable sin. There is no indication that he ever had the Holy Spirit to begin with. Paul is using Esau as an example for those of us who do have God’s Holy Spirit, not to behave as Esau behaved.

Paul warned us in Hebrews 2:1–3 not to drift away, because the unpardonable sin *can begin* with neglect. He also warns us in Hebrews 3:7–19, not to harden our hearts through the deceitfulness of sin and not to develop an evil heart of unbelief—a rebellious attitude—thereby departing from God. So Paul IS telling us to be diligent, as Peter, also, tells us in 2 Peter 1:10, to become “even more diligent” to make our call and election sure.

BUT—here is the crux of the matter: Some have concluded, in reading Hebrews 12:17, that Esau sought from God repentance diligently with tears, but that he found no repentance; that is, God had decided not to grant him repentance anymore. They then concluded that we, too, can commit the unpardonable sin, although we desperately WANT to repent.

This conclusion is clearly Biblically wrong. Someone commits the unpardonable sin *because he CANNOT* obtain forgiveness; and he cannot obtain forgiveness, because he does not WANT to repent.

Notice how other translations render verse 17, making the intended meaning much clearer:

For instance, the *New Jewish Bible* says: “As you know, when

he wanted to obtain the blessing afterwards, he was rejected and, though he pleaded for it with tears, he could find no way of *reversing the decision*.”

The *New International Version* states: “Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about *no change of mind*, though he sought the blessing with tears.”

The big question is: *Whose repentance or change of mind* is this passage talking about? *Whose decision* was Esau trying to reverse? **Esau’s or Isaac’s?**

Recall that Esau begged his father Isaac to change his decision—to give him a blessing, too. But Isaac said, in effect: “I can’t change my mind, and I can’t change what I have done—I blessed Jacob, and Jacob will remain blessed” (compare Genesis 27:33–41).

“Repentance” simply means, “change of mind.” The Greek word is, “*metanoia*.” It is used many times for our spiritual repentance—forsaking the ways of this world and going God’s way—but it does not necessarily *have to* refer to that kind of repentance. It just means, “change of mind.”

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible gives us, as one possibility, the following definition, under No. 3341: “reversal of *another’s* decision.”

In this particular passage, in Hebrews 12:17, Paul is referring to the fact that Esau’s father **Isaac** would not change **his** mind.

Note how the *20th Century New Testament* renders this passage: “... for he found no place for a change of mind in his father...”

This passage, then, does not tell us that Esau was seeking, with tears, to repent; that God refused to grant him repentance; and that Esau, therefore, committed the unpardonable sin. Note, too, that the word “it” in the phrase, “although he sought **IT** diligently with tears,” can refer, from the Greek structure of the sentence, to “repentance” or “change of mind,” but it can also refer to “blessing.” In other words, the Greek allows this translation as well (compare footnote of the *Elberfelder Bible*):

“... when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance (or, change of mind), though he sought it (the blessing) diligently with tears.” Also, compare again the rendering of this passage in the *New International Version*, as quoted above.

Either way, this Scripture cannot be used to say that we can commit the unpardonable sin, even though we desire, diligently and with tears, to repent of our sins. That would be in total contradiction with the very concept of the unpardonable sin.

PREDESTINATION AND THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

No one is predestined to commit the unpardonable sin. The concept that God has determined “from the foundation of the world” that some would commit the unpardonable sin is Biblically wrong. God gives us free will. It is up to us to decide what to do. God has the utmost confidence that we will qualify for His kingdom when He calls us to salvation in this life, grants us repentance and forgiveness, and gives us His Holy Spirit (see next chapter). But this does not mean that it is impossible for us to commit the unpardonable sin.

When God created angels, giving them free will, He did not KNOW that one-third of them would turn against Him. But as beings with free determination, He KNEW that it was possible.

When God called King Saul and gave him His Holy Spirit, God did not know that King Saul would fall away. In fact, Saul had everything going for him. He did not have to rebel against God. He could have succeeded. But since he failed, he serves as a warning for us not to follow his bad example.

Some might ask the question, If God is all-knowing, how is it possible that He does not know whether someone will commit the unpardonable sin or not? Didn't God make a mistake when He called King Saul, given the fact that he turned out to be a failure?

The answer to that question is, God has *CHOSEN* not to know. He most certainly *COULD* know, if He wanted to. He has the ability to look into the future. But God *DECIDED* that He does not want to know whether someone He calls to salvation will ultimately fall away from Him. When God calls someone today, the person does *NOT* have to fall away! In fact, the ones God calls today have everything going for them.

When God allows trials in our lives, it is for the purpose of making us spiritually stronger so that we can deal with the trials and overcome them. God tests us so that we won't sin! It is Satan who tempts us so that we will sin. And as we handle our trials, God learns more about us.

He is getting to know us—how we act and react—by the choices we make in our lives. But God has *chosen* not to KNOW, in advance, how we will act, even though He has the utmost confidence that we will act in a way that is pleasing to Him.

For instance, we read earlier that God has CHOSEN not to remember sins that He has forgiven. He just blocks them out—erases them from His mind. God can do that with the past and He can do that with the future. He CHOOSES not to know ahead of time whether or not someone will commit the unpardonable sin, even though He knows that some will do so.

We read that, at the time of Noah, God was sorry about the wickedness of man and that He regretted having made him (Genesis 6:5–6). We read in Jeremiah that God said He never even *thought* about such evil things which they did (Jeremiah 19:5; 32:35).

Again, when it comes to the unpardonable sin or certain grievous sins in general, God has chosen not to know about them in advance.

At the same time, the Bible clearly shows that the evil conduct of some is preordained—*predestined*. We covered the examples of Judas Iscariot and the future “false prophet”, as well as the Pharaoh of Egypt. We also read about a future king of Assyria—none other than the “beast” in the book of Revelation—whom God will use to punish modern Israel (Isaiah 10:5–7, 12). God is using those individuals to bring about prophecy. HOWEVER, that evil conduct does not relate to committing the unpardonable sin. Even though God uses evil men to carry out His purpose, He does not “make” them commit the unpardonable sin. It is not as if they never had a chance. They will still get their chance to qualify for God’s Kingdom in the Second Resurrection.

HOW NOT TO COMMIT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

God warns us not to commit the unpardonable sin. He said to His Church in Philadelphia: “Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:11). So, it is possible that we *COULD* lose our crown, but it is not very likely for those who have been *truly* called by God in this life. However, it *IS* possible. Paul warned the Church in Galatia: “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have *KNOWN* God, or rather *ARE KNOWN BY* God, how is it that you turn *AGAIN*

to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe [pagan festivals, such as] days and months and seasons and years [including Sunday, Christmas and Easter]. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored in vain... Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:8–11, 16).

However, when we WANT to repent and when we WANT forgiveness, God will give it to us. Only those who permanently, hatefully and maliciously REFUSE to repent will not obtain forgiveness. They, and only they, are the ones committing the unpardonable sin.

We have not committed the unpardonable sin, as long as we have the desire to go God's Way and to change—hating the wrong things that we do—and as long as we want God's Holy Spirit within us to enable us to overcome our sinful nature (even though we may slip at times and sin).

If we love God and His way, and if we want God to help us to get rid of what is wrong with the way we are, then God will help us, and we do not need to worry about having committed the unpardonable sin.

Let us realize the GREAT LOVE that God has for us! **God has called us to salvation**, and **He wants us to succeed!** Only we can prevent ourselves from doing just that. Notice Jude 24–25: "*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.*"

God can, and will, help us to overcome our sinful nature. He will help us to avoid committing the unpardonable sin. But it is up to us to *let Him* help us.

Chapter 6

WE WILL SUCCEED!

True Christians ought to have a continual attitude of thankfulness and appreciation to God for both the physical blessings and spiritual blessings that He gives us. There is one most fundamental reason WHY we CAN be truly thankful to God. That reason is the PROMISE that we who are called, *WILL make it into God's Kingdom!*

Yes, God has called us to SUCCEED. If God had any doubt whether or not we would succeed, He would not have called us in this day and age. God is SURE and CERTAIN that we will make it! How certain are WE?

Let us notice God's absolute **conviction** that YOU, if you are one of God's begotten children, WILL make it into His kingdom. Realize first, that, as far as God is concerned, it is already a done deal. Only ONE person can stop you from qualifying, and that person is YOU! As we saw in the last chapter, it IS possible for those who are truly called to salvation, to commit the "unpardonable sin." That is why the concept, "once saved—always saved," is wrong. We *were* saved from our past sins (Matthew 1:21; compare Romans 3:25); we are *being saved* right now (Acts 2:47); and we *will be saved* in the future—when Christ returns (Romans 5:10). Only the one who endures to the end *will be saved* (Matthew 24:13). We need to conquer our fears and doubts, and that is why we need to overcome our carnality that tempts us to return to this world. BUT, in God's eyes, this battle WILL BE won! It is not impossible to succeed! To the contrary, it is certain that we WILL succeed, as long as we let God live and rule our lives. And THAT is WHY we can be truly thankful, always, now and forever!

NO ROOM FOR DOUBT

There can be no room for doubt if we consider God's frame of mind and His unshakable promises for us. Realize that God does not present His "offers" in questionable, doubtful language.

For instance, when we review Ephesians 1:3–14, we find that:

- God *has blessed us* with EVERY spiritual blessing.
- He *chose us* BEFORE the foundation of the world.
- We *were PREDESTINED* to become His sons and daughters.
- He *made us* accepted in the Beloved, Jesus Christ.
- In Him, we *HAVE* redemption through His blood.
- In Him, we *HAVE OBTAINED* an inheritance.
- We *were already sealed* with the Holy Spirit, which is a guarantee; a down payment; an earnest; proof of our inheritance.

There is NO room for doubt! This is not worded in “iffy” language. In God’s eyes, it is already accomplished—a done deal! What a fantastic blessing!

We also read in 2 Peter 1:2–11 that:

- God’s divine power *has given us* ALL THINGS pertaining to eternal life.
- If we do our part, we *will never* stumble.
- God *will provide us* ABUNDANTLY an entrance into His kingdom.

As long as we are determined to make our calling and election sure, we WILL win! Again, we do not find any room for doubt or uncertainty.

In Philippians 1:3–6, Paul was confident that God, who began the good work in the brethren—calling them out of this world and giving them His Holy Spirit—would complete His work in them. That is, they *WOULD* make it into the Kingdom. Again, there is no doubt or uncertainty expressed here.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:3–5, we read that the “Lord WILL establish you and guard you from the evil one,” and that Paul and his coworkers had “*confidence* in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and WILL DO the things we command you.”

Also note the confidence Christ had in Peter. Christ was *convinced* that Peter would become converted; that his faith would not fail; and that he would make it into the kingdom. Christ told Peter in Luke 22:32: “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me [i.e., when you have become *converted*], strengthen your brethren.” Later, in John 21:18, Christ prophesied that Peter would die a violent death, but that he would do so in the faith.

John added the following comment, in verse 19: “This He spoke, signifying by what death he would *glorify God*...”

In Romans 8:1, Paul tells us that there is no condemnation for those who walk in the Spirit.

In Romans 8:28–30, Paul points out, in very specific and no uncertain terms, that:

- God foreknew us.
- God predestined us.
- God called us.
- God justified us.
- God HAS glorified us. We are not yet glorified, but in God’s eyes, it is as good as done.

The *Nelson Study Bible* points out: “To predestine means ‘to mark out beforehand,’ ‘to establish one’s boundary, or one’s limits, beforehand.’ Our English word horizon is a derivative of this Greek word. The Christian’s ultimate destiny or horizon has been fixed by God from all eternity: to be made like His Son. Note how the words predestined, called, justified, and especially glorified in Rom. 8:29, 30 are in the past tense. That is because God, from His eternal perspective, sees this process as having been completed already... But still, in the march of time, we must undergo the process of being conformed to the image of God’s Son.”

The same applies when Christ was here on earth. In John 17:5, Christ asked the Father to give Him the glory which He used to have before He became a human being. So when He asked for His former glory, He did not yet have it. It would be given to Him at the time of His resurrection. But in John 17:22, we read that Christ said He GAVE the glory (which He did not yet have) to the brethren. They had not yet received it either. But in Christ’s eyes, it was as good as done. Christ goes even a step further, in John 17:24. He says there that He wants the brethren to behold Christ’s glory that God GAVE Him. But, again, Christ did not have it yet at the time He made those statements. He KNEW, though, that God would give it to Him, at the time of His resurrection from the dead. Do WE have that SAME confidence that God will give US His and Christ’s glory?

In Romans 4:17, we read that God “calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” Other renderings make the meaning clearer.

The *Living Bible* says: “God... speaks of future events with as much certainty as though they were already past.” The *Menge Bible* states: “...who calls that what is not yet existent, as if it were already in existence.”

Christ KNEW that He WOULD receive, from the Father, the glory that He had before He became a human being. Christ made those statements BEFORE His final trial of suffering and crucifixion. He was CONFIDENT that He would not fail! And so was His Father! Although Christ did not yet have His glory, He spoke with conviction and certainty as if He had received it already.

We find another positive and certain statement in Romans 8:37–39. In that passage, Paul describes his persuasion that NOTHING could prevent him from entering God’s Kingdom, which God’s love promised him. This is not to say that he did not carefully examine himself in areas where he was falling short. But he knew that Christ in us enables us to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (verses 3–4). He also knew that Christ was delivering him, and that *He would continue to deliver him* from this body of death that was tempting him to sin (Romans 7:24–25). Again, as long as Paul allowed Christ to live in him and guide and direct his life, he could be SURE that he would make it. Now, he was not just speaking about himself, but about everyone in whom God’s Spirit dwells.

Paul said in Romans 8:37 that we are “more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” The *Living Bible* says: “...overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* states: “We come through all these things triumphantly victorious by the power of him who loved us.”

Again, when God calls us to salvation, He is confident that we can and will make it. Notice, again, Acts 2:47. The *New King James Bible* talks about those whom God called to salvation, as people, “...who were being saved.” The *Authorized Version* and the *Elberfelder Bible* state: “... as should be saved.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* writes: “...destined to be saved.”

In God’s eyes, they were not destined to fail; they were destined to succeed! We read in Luke 12:32: “Do not fear, little flock, for it is [correctly translated: WAS, or: HAS BEEN] your Father’s good pleasure to give YOU the kingdom.”

This does not mean that everyone who formerly attended services of God's Church, and then later left the Church, has committed the unpardonable sin. Many who left were never truly called. They only assumed they were, but they had never truly repented and SURRENDERED to God. We read in 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be manifest, that **none of them** were of us."

But it is different with those of us who "have an anointing from the Holy One" (verse 20)—that is, who have received God's Holy Spirit. As we explained earlier, we know for certain that the name of every individual who has received God's Holy Spirit HAS BEEN WRITTEN DOWN in God's Book of Life. The individual names ARE IN the Book, and God will only remove the name of such a person if that person commits the unpardonable sin. But God does not expect that. He did not go through the trouble of writing your name into His book, expecting to erase it again. Insofar as God is concerned, He is confident that your name stays in His Book.

When God calls us and gives us His Spirit, we are His children. God will never abort us (compare Romans 11:29). Only we can abort ourselves, causing a spiritual miscarriage. But God WANTS His children to be born into His Family.

When reading 1 John 3:1–2, we should be struck with the realization that John KNEW that he would be like Christ at His return. He KNEW that he would make it. He had no doubt about it. Do you KNOW this about YOURSELF, too?

How did John know? He tells us in verse 3 that he continued to purify himself. He did not say: "I've got it made, there is nothing else I have to do." No, He went on conquering! But he KNEW that he would be successful, because Christ was in him, helping him.

On his road to victory, he had to keep God's law more and more perfectly, as 1 John 5:2–3 explains: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

God's love in him helped him to keep the law—to be obedient to the law.

The *New King James Bible* says that God's laws are "not burdensome." *Lamsa* says, that they are "not difficult." The *Living Bible* says: "not hard at all," and the *Elberfelder Bible* translates: "not heavy." This is confirmed in Matthew 11:28–30, where we read that we should take Christ's yoke upon us, as Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

We are slaves of Christ, Who bought us with the price of His blood. We are to obey Him as our Master. But His commandments are not difficult for us to obey. Early in our conversion, perhaps they seemed difficult. Perhaps it was not easy for us to begin tithing, or to keep the Sabbath or the Holy Days, or to stop eating pork, or to refrain from stealing or lying or committing adultery. But in time, it should have become more and more easy to be obedient to God. Those who stayed faithful in God's Church and who remained steadfast in the truth, have developed a Godly habit of keeping the Sabbath, of tithing, or of asking for time off for the annual Holy Days. We must make progress in our conversion!

STRIVING FOR A PREDESTINED GOAL?

When we consider the fact that God foreknew us and predestined us to be called to salvation in this life, and that God has the utmost confidence that we will qualify and enter the Kingdom of God, why, then is it necessary to actually strive for this goal? If it is all preordained, we might as well become sluggish and cease overcoming our sins, as our success is assured. Right?

Wrong! This is a fallacy!

As we have seen, it IS possible to fall away, beginning with neglecting to do what we are supposed to do in our daily lives, thus setting in motion the process that will lead to eternal condemnation—permanent, total obliteration.

When we are truly called to salvation and have God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and if we tap into the power of His Spirit and use it continually to overcome, we would not even think of becoming indifferent or negligent in God's Way. God's Spirit in us will **MOTIVATE** us to overcome our weaknesses! It will **INSPIRE** us to strive—work hard—for God and His Way so that entrance into His Kingdom will be abundantly provided for us.

We might use the following example and analogy: A highly successful

athlete is confident, based on past experiences, that he will do well in the next race. So is his coach. But if the athlete stops preparing for the next race, begins to eat the wrong food, indulges in an excessive lifestyle, misses sleep and exercise, and gives up on his daily training, his success is anything but guaranteed. The same is true in our spiritual life. When we do our part, our spiritual success is guaranteed, and as long as God's Spirit dwells in us and leads and directs us, we ARE the "sons of God" (Romans 8:14). That is to say that, having done our part, we WILL BE successful! And whatever sins we commit on our way to ultimate success, God will forgive them, upon our genuine repentance.

GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FOR US

Let us consider additional Scriptures that delineate the expectations that God and Christ have of us, so that we can qualify to enter the Kingdom. Matthew 19:29 tells us that EVERYONE who has left His relatives, friends or possessions for Christ's and the gospel's sake, SHALL inherit eternal life. Again, there is no room for doubt. Compare also Luke 18:29–30.

Matthew 25:34 tells us that the kingdom is prepared for the blessed of the Father—for you and me—from the foundation of the world! **God WANTS us there!** He would not have called us to salvation NOW, if we could not make it. God knows that we CAN make it! God knows that we WILL make it, as long as we submit to Him, continually, without giving up.

John 5:24 explains that if we believe in God and the fact that we must obey Him, and we stay committed to that cause, we *HAVE ALREADY PASSED FROM DEATH TO LIFE*. We *ALREADY HAVE* everlasting life! It's as good as done! Again, we find here no room for doubt.

John 6:54 confirms that, as long as we stay committed and renew our covenant with God yearly by participating at Passover services in a worthy manner, we *HAVE* eternal life. Christ *WILL* raise us up to eternal life. In God's mind, there is *NO* doubt about this. There must not be any doubt in us.

How, then, are we to understand 1 Peter 4:18, which says: "Now 'the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'"

It says, "scarcely." It does not say, "barely." The context here is suffering

(compare verses 12–16, and verse 19). Paul said that we must enter God’s Kingdom with many tribulations, or much suffering (Acts 14:22).

The Greek word for “scarcely,” *molis*, is defined, among other things, as: “with difficulty, with much work” (Strong’s, No. 3433). Others say that it means, “with toil and fatigue.”

The *Revised English Bible* reads: “It is hard enough for the righteous to be saved; what then will become of the impious and sinful?”

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says that the word is associated with difficulty. In Luke 9:39, it is translated as “hardly,” describing the difficulty in casting out demons.

The *Interlinear Bible* also renders the word as, “with difficulty.”

So, then, 1 Peter 4:18 does not tell us that our salvation is a big question mark in God’s eyes—that we may not make it, and if we do, it will be just barely. Rather, God is convinced that we will make it—but we do have to withstand trials and persecution and temptations. But, as we read earlier, it is not burdensome for us to keep God’s law.

MORE ASSURANCES

We are told in Colossians 1:12–13 that we have become qualified to be partakers of the inheritance; and that God HAS DELIVERED US from Satan and that He HAS transferred us into the Kingdom of His Son. As far as God is concerned, we are already there.

Remember that during the “transfiguration on the mount,” some of Christ’s disciples saw Christ, Elijah and Moses, with Christ shown in His glorified state (compare Matthew 17:2–3). God the Father showed them this vision (see verse 9), as there was no doubt in the Father’s mind that Christ would be in His Kingdom.

God testified about Abraham when he was still alive, that He knew that Abraham feared God (Genesis 22:12); in other words, that he would make it. He also said that when He anointed David to be king, David would do **all of God’s Will** (Acts 13:22). This does not mean that David would never sin, but it did mean that God knew David and his heart well enough to foresee that he would repent of his sins.

God tells us in the book of Revelation that, at the time of Christ’s return, the bride—God’s Church—has *made herself ready* (compare Revelation 19:7).

Notice the confidence that God expects us to have, even when it

comes to our prayers. We are told that by Christ's stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). We are also told that we HAVE the petitions that we have asked of Him (1 John 5:15). That is, before we actually see the fulfillment of our prayers in physical terms—including a prayer for healing from sickness—we are already assured, spiritually, that we have received the same. We need to apply that concept—that same confidence—to our entrance into God's Kingdom. We read earlier that we have been called and *predestined* according to God's eternal purpose. It is God's purpose to bring us into His kingdom.

We read in Titus 1:2 about our “hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” This hope, though, is not an uncertain hope. It is not something like, “Well, maybe I'll receive eternal life, and maybe I won't. Who knows?” Rather, it is a positive hope—the knowledge that eternal life **WILL BE GIVEN TO US!** God has promised it, and it is His purpose to give it to us!

GOD WILL DO WHAT HE HAS PURPOSED!

God's purpose and counsel shall stand! God will do what He has purposed! His unalterable will in this regard, and the certainty of our hope, are expressed in Hebrews 6:17–19. We are told in that passage that God's purpose CANNOT change, and that God CANNOT lie, so we CAN KNOW that, insofar as God is concerned, we WILL make it!

The *Living Bible* translates Hebrews 6:17–19 in this way: “God also bound himself with an oath, so that those he promised to help would be *perfectly sure and never need to wonder* whether he might change his plans. He has given us both his promise and his oath, two things we can completely count on, for it is impossible for God to tell a lie. Now all those who flee to him to save them *can take new courage* when they hear such assurances from God; now **they can know without doubt that he will give them the salvation he has promised them.** This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven...”

Sometimes, we may look at ourselves and say, We will never be able to overcome. We need to understand, though, that it is Christ in us that gives us the power to overcome, and remember that with God, nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37; Matthew 19:26).

We have been **predestined**, before time began—from and before

the foundation of the earth—to be called by God in this day and age, to salvation. God wants us to be in His Kingdom (compare Luke 12:32). He sent His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, so that we CAN qualify. That is how much He wants you to inherit eternal life in His very Family.

How much do *you* want it?

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