

GOD IS...



OUR DESTINY!

About the cover: 2 Corinthians 6:18 states: "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." The destiny of mankind is to be born into the Family of God, and this booklet reveals the astounding proof of what God has promised.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 GOD IS a FAMILY!	3
The Father Is God.....	3
Jesus Christ Is God	3
“God” Is a FAMILY NAME.....	5
Chapter 2 The God Family IS the Kingdom of God	7
Chapter 3 Being in God’s Family	9
We Will Be IN the Kingdom of God	10
The Kingdom Is Dual.....	10
Chapter 4 The Kingdom of God and of Christ	13
Chapter 5 The Gospel OF the Kingdom	15
Chapter 6 To Be Born Into the God Family	17
Not Yet Born Again	17
In the Image of God	19
We Must Be Changed	19
To Become God	20
Chapter 7 Equal with God	23
Christ Is Equal with the Father	23
Man Is to Become Equal with the Father and Christ.....	24
We Are to Obtain Sonship from God the Father.....	25
Chapter 8 No Other God(s)	27
The Beast and the False Prophet	27
Foreign Gods.....	29
Only ONE God Being?	30
Plurality in the Godhead.....	31
No Other Gods.....	34
The “LORD”	34
Chapter 9 Jesus — THE God of the Old Testament	37
God Spoke to Israel.....	38
A Voice from Heaven	40
Angels Communicate God’s Words	41
Cut Off From God	42
Cut Off from God the FATHER	44
Chapter 10 The Spirit of the Father and of Christ	47
The Spirit of the Father	47
The Spirit of Christ.....	49
Chapter 11 HOW Did Christ Become a Human Being?	51
The Spirit in Man	52
Christ’s Holy Spirit.....	54
False Understanding.....	54
Chapter 12 The “Only-Begotten” Son	55
Begotten Sons and Daughters.....	55

Fundamental Difference	57
Chapter 13 Does God Have Feelings and Emotions?	59
Fullness of Joy.....	59
God May Be Grieved.....	60
Christ Intercedes for Us	61
God Is Jealous.....	61
Chapter 14 Does God Know the Future?	63
God Propheted Future Events.....	63
God Brings It About	64
God Knows Ahead of Time.....	64
God Decides Not to Know.....	65
God “Learns” from Human Conduct.....	66
Did God Know that Adam and Eve Would Sin?	67
Did God Know that Jesus Would NOT Sin?	67
God Has Confidence in Us	68
Chapter 15 Does God Travel?	69
Did Jesus Resurrect Himself?	69
God Has Form and Shape	70
How Is God Everywhere at the Same Time?	71
God Came Down from Heaven	72
All Untrue?	73
Chapter 16 Does God Listen to Billions of Prayers at the Same Time?	75
God Knows Our Thoughts	75
God’s Omnipresence	76
God’s Holy Spirit	77
God Does Not Listen Today to Billions of Prayers	79
God Does Not Hear “Sinners”.....	80
God May Listen to Unconverted People	81
Children of Converted Parents	82
God Not Just One Being.....	83
The Function of Angels.....	85
Guardian Angels.....	87
Angels Watch Over Us.....	88
Angels Are Assigned to Help Us	89
Chapter 17 WHO Does Answer our Prayers?	91
God’s Love for Us.....	92
Only One Mediator.....	93
Chapter 18 Who Will Resurrect the Dead?	95
God the FATHER Will Resurrect Us.....	96
Will Jesus Christ Resurrect Us?	97
In Complete Harmony.....	97
Through and With Jesus	98
Chapter 19 What Will We Be in the First Resurrection?	101
Horrible Misconceptions	101
Man-Like Appearance.....	104

Neither Male nor Female?.....	105
How Will We Look in the First Resurrection?	106
Melchizedek.....	107
Not Recognized	107
In Another Form	108
Appearing “Differently”	108
We Can Be Recognized.....	109
Chapter 20 What Are Spiritual Bodies?	111
The Resurrection of Christ.....	113
Spiritual Bodies.....	113
Composed of Spirit	114
Chapter 21 What Will We Remember?	117
Remembering Sins?	117
David’s Sins	117
God Will Not “Remember” Our Sins.....	119
Forgiving and Forgetting?	120
Chapter 22 What Will We Do?	123
“You Are Gods”	123
Life-Giving Spirits	124
Our Role in the Second Resurrection.....	126
New Heavens and a New Earth	127
Conclusion	129

Introduction

We read in Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” The word “gospel” simply means “good news.”

Jesus Christ was a messenger sent by God the Father to proclaim the Gospel or the good news of the Kingdom of God. But WHAT did He proclaim? What IS the Kingdom of God? What does the “Kingdom” of God have to do with God?

Who and what IS God? Is He one Person—two Persons—three Persons? Is He an impersonal “blob” without form and shape, and without any emotions?

Who and what was and is Jesus Christ? How did He become the firstborn among many brethren? How, in what way, was He resurrected? What kind of a Body does He have today?

Why do we read that man can enter and have a part in God’s Kingdom (Mark 10:23)? What has God to do with our destiny? In what way IS GOD our destiny?

What happens to us when we die? Will we be resurrected after death? And if so, how will *we* be resurrected? Why do we read that we are to “inherit” the Kingdom of God after death?

Why do we read that we must be Spirit in order to be in God’s Kingdom? And what will we be and do after we have entered the Kingdom of God?

Most people do not understand any of those questions. They are mysteries to them (Mark 4:11–12). Perhaps they are mysteries to you. But they don’t have to be. This booklet explains what has been hidden from the foundation of the earth!

Chapter 1

GOD IS a FAMILY!

Most have never heard that God is not just one Being, or a closed Trinity of three Persons, but God is a Family, RULING over creation. The God Family consists right now of TWO Personages—the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is not a third member of the God Family, but it is the power and the mind of God proceeding from both the Father and the Son, as will be explained later.

The Father Is God

It is accepted by most professing Christians that the Father is God. After Christ's resurrection, Christ told Mary: "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to MY GOD and your God" (John 20:17). In Ephesians 1:17, Paul refers to the Father as the "GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ." Several decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we find a statement that was recorded by John, an apostle of Jesus Christ: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which GOD GAVE HIM to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John" (Revelation 1:1).

Jesus Christ Is God

However, there are quite a few who debate the concept that the Son, Jesus Christ, is God, even though the Bible is very clear on this point.

John 1:18 tells us: "No one has ever seen God [the Father]. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (*New Revised Standard Version*). Notice the rendering of this passage in the *New American Bible*: "No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him." Similar rendering is also used in the *Luther Bible*: "No one has seen God at any time; the only Begotten, WHO IS GOD and who is in the Father's

bosom, has revealed Him to us." The *Elberfelder Bible* comments in an annotation that many old and good sources render the phrase, "the only-begotten Son," as "the only-begotten GOD."

Additionally, Romans 9:5 refers to Jesus Christ as "the eternally blessed God." Hebrews 1:8 refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as "God." In Isaiah 9:6–7, we read about Christ: "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God..."

After His resurrection, "doubting Thomas" identified Jesus as his God (John 20:28).

Indeed, Jesus Christ identified Himself several times in the New Testament as the "I am"—the Eternal or Ever-living One (John 8:58). As we will discuss, HE was the God of the Old Testament, dealing directly with the people, speaking to them and even manifesting Himself to them. It had to be Christ who did this, because He Himself said that no one has ever seen the form of "God" (the Father) or heard the voice of God (the Father). (Compare John 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 1 John 4:12).

The Jews thought that they worshipped the Father, erroneously thinking that He was the God of the Old Testament. That is why we read that Christ came to REVEAL the Father to them (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). The Jews thought they knew the Father, not realizing that the God of the Old Testament was Jesus Christ—not God the Father. And they rejected the fact that Christ was "Immanuel"—"God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Jesus Christ—the Word or *Logos* or Son of God—was "WITH" God (Greek: *theos*) since all eternity, and He also "WAS" God (Greek: *theos*) (John 1:1–2). That means there were two God beings—Christ, the "Word of God" (Revelation 19:13) and God the FATHER.

Christ was clearly God before He came to this earth! Paul explains in 1 Timothy 3:16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: GOD was manifest in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

Philippians 2:5–7 reads: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of GOD, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation,

TAKING THE FORM OF A BONDSERVANT, and coming IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN."

The Bible is also very clear that Christ *IS* God now! Notice Titus 2:11–14: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

"God" Is a FAMILY NAME

The word "God" is a NAME that can refer to both the Father and the Son. It is, in fact, a FAMILY name. Ephesians 3:14–15 confirms this truth, telling us that it is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole FAMILY in heaven and earth is NAMED."

Note, too, how the *New International Version* renders Hebrews 2:11: "Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy ARE of the same FAMILY."

In addition, the *Menge Bible* includes in the annotation to Ephesians 2:19 that the term "household of God" means "members of the FAMILY of God" (in German, "Mitglieder der Gottesfamilie").

In the Hebrew, the word for "God" is many times *Elohim*, but it is a word with plural meaning. That is the reason why we read that God (*Elohim*) said in Genesis 1:26: "Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness." And God also said in Genesis 3:22: "Behold the man has become like one of US, to know good and evil..."

The word *Elohim* or "God" can refer to either one of the two Beings in the God-Family. When in Genesis 1:26, God or *Elohim* says, "Let US make man in OUR image," one God Being speaks to the other God Being, referring to both of them as "Us." And we know from the New Testament that God the Father created everything through Jesus Christ (compare Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:1–2; Colossians 1:16). It was Christ, then, who did the actual work of creating man, and He created man in His image. Christ is also the image of the Father (compare 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 and Colossians 1:15). Therefore, when Christ created man in His image, He also created man in the image

of the Father. God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son look the same. Man, then, was created in the image of GOD—in the image of both God the Father and God the Son.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 reads, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” In the original Hebrew, the word for “Creator” is in the plural, which should be translated as “Creators.” Both the Father and the Son are Creators. God the Father created everything, including man, through Jesus Christ. We find a similar statement in Job 35:10, “But no one says, Where is God my Maker...?” In the original, it says, “Where is God my Makers?...”

Jesus Christ was the “I am”—the Eternal or Ever-living One.

God the Father was always the Father and Jesus Christ was always the Son of God—showing that God was ALWAYS a Family, as the terms “Father” and “Son” signify. It is not correct to say that God BECAME the Father and Jesus Christ BECAME the Son when Christ was conceived in Mary’s womb through the power of the Father’s Holy Spirit. Christ was ALWAYS the Son of God, but when He became a human being in Mary’s womb, He BECAME the Son of Man. At that point, God the Father—the Father of Christ as the Son of God—became the Father of Christ as the Son of MAN.

Chapter 2

The God Family IS the Kingdom of God

Christ is the KING of the Kingdom (under God the Father), and the terms King and Kingdom are often used interchangeably in the Bible (compare Daniel 2:37–39, where Nebuchadnezzar, the first king in the statue, is identified with his kingdom).

Christ, the King (John 18:37), rules in and over the Kingdom of God but not this world which is now ruled by Satan the devil (John 18:36). Christ, being part of God's Kingdom, rules in and over the Kingdom of God under God the Father who is the HIGHEST in the Godhead (John 14:28; Ephesians 1:17; Luke 1:32; 1 Corinthians 11:3).

In Matthew 12:25–26, Christ answered the evil and malicious accusation of the Pharisees claiming that He was casting out demons with the power of Satan, by identifying Satan (the ruler over the demonic realm) with his demonic kingdom (as Satan is the head of his kingdom; being part of it), saying this:

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation... If Satan casts out Satan... how will his kingdom stand?”

Clearer still in Mark 3:23–24: “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom (Satan) is divided against itself (Satan), that kingdom cannot stand.”

As a human king rules in and over his kingdom and is part of that kingdom; and as Satan rules in and over his demonic kingdom and is part of it; so God rules in and over His Kingdom and is part of it. In other words, God Beings constitute or are the Kingdom of God, ruling over creation.

Chapter 3

Being in God's Family

As we will see, it is the potential of man to become God—to be IN the God FAMILY. *That is why we will explain in great detail in this booklet who and what God is—what the nature of God is—as God's nature will be our nature as well. As we will learn, it is our DESTINY to become God—as God is God!*

Man was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) to ultimately become God (1 Corinthians 15:49). The book of Psalms speaks of men as (potential) gods. Psalm 82:6 reads: "I said, 'You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High.'" Jesus used this passage to prove that He was the Son of God (John 10:31–39). We read in Psalms 17:15 that David was looking forward to the time, when God would resurrect him from the dead and when he would "awake in Your likeness." We also read that in the future, men will come to worship true (glorified) Christians (Revelation 3:9). No man nor powerful angels, but only God is worthy of worship (Acts 10:25–26; Revelation 19:10; 22:8–9).

True converted Christians are already part of the God Family. They are not yet glorified and *born* again, but they have been *begotten* into the Family of God. (This will be discussed later.) They ARE already the children of God (1 John 3:1–2), and they will be LIKE or by nature EQUAL WITH God and Jesus Christ, when they will be born into the God Family at the time of Christ's return. They will be fully Spirit, fully God—no more flesh and blood (Romans 8:19–30).

Jesus Christ is the FIRSTBORN among many brethren, to be conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). The Bible tells us that those who are called today to salvation and remain faithful, will be what Christ is today. We will be like Him, as He is. We will share the Father's and Christ's very divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Romans 8:32 also clarifies this point: "He who did not spare His

own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

"All things" means exactly that—it includes God's nature and glory (Romans 5:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:14); and it includes rule over the new heavens and the new earth AND the unending future of God's Kingdom (Revelation 21:5–7). Man is to become a "joint heir" with Christ in "all things."

We will become members of the God Family—God Beings. We will be "like Christ"—Sons and Daughters of God, with Christ being our Elder Brother.

That is what it says in Ephesians 3:19. Paul wants us "to be filled"—ultimately—"with all the fullness of God." What does this mean? It means that we will be glorified God Beings (compare John 17:5; 22).

We Will Be IN the Kingdom of God

When we enter and become part of the God Family, as born-again Christians; that is, *when we are IN the God Family, then we are also IN the Kingdom of God.*

1 Corinthians 15:50–54 tells us that we cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, as long as we are flesh and blood. We must be changed to incorruptibility and immortality to be in God's Kingdom.

John 3:3, 5–8 explains that we must be born again to be able to "see" and "enter" the Kingdom of God. We must BE BORN of the Spirit and BE Spirit in order to be in God's Kingdom. Then, man cannot see us anymore (unless we materialize ourselves), as one cannot see the wind, even though one can most certainly hear the sound of the wind and notice its effects. When we make ourselves visible in glory, we will appear as shining as the sun IN God's Kingdom (Matthew 13:43), as Christ's "countenance" is like the sun shining in its strength (Revelation 1:16).

The Kingdom Is Dual

In Herbert Armstrong's booklet, *Your Awesome Future*, the following was stated very succinctly on page 15:

"... the kingdom of God will be dual:

- A GOVERNMENT. A government—or kingdom—is compared to four things: (a) a KING, ruling over (b) people, subjects or citizens

within (c) a definite jurisdiction of territory, with (d) laws and an organized system of administering them.

- A FAMILY (as the kingdom of Israel was a family of the children of Israel)—in this case the Family of God—a family into which humans may be born, which shall be a GOVERNING or RULING family that shall have jurisdiction over ALL NATIONS—that is, the WHOLE Earth—and later, the entire universe.”

So, the Kingdom of God describes God’s rule (compare Psalm 103:19; Revelation 11:15; Daniel 7:14). When we enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25:34), we will participate in God’s rule over His creation (Revelation 20:4, 6; 22:5; Daniel 7:18, 22, 27).

But when we enter the Kingdom of God, we also enter His very Family. It is important to understand that God IS a Family; not only, that He HAS a Family. The difference is substantial. The God Family is reproducing itself—it is not just “adopting” children.

We read earlier that we are to inherit God’s glory. Notice what else we are to inherit: In 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Paul charges the brethren “to walk worthy of God who calls you into His own KINGDOM and glory.” Not only into His glory—the glory that He has—but also into His Kingdom; that is, the Kingdom of which He is a part of and its Head.

Jesus told His disciples that prior to their death, some of them would “see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1). Six days later, He took Peter, James and John and went with them to a high mountain, where they saw in a vision (Matthew 17:9) that He appeared in a glorified state, together with Elijah and Moses. They saw future events, when the Kingdom of God would rule on earth. Matthew 16:28 explains even more clearly what exactly Christ told the disciples prior to the vision: “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming IN His kingdom.”

Many read over verses like these without catching their full meaning: Christ announced that some disciples would see, in a vision, the Kingdom of God in its power—not just the glorified Christ—but the glorified Christ IN His Kingdom. They would see the Kingdom of God coming and Christ in it as a Member of the KINGDOM OF GOD.

The same is expressed in Luke 23:42, where the repentant thief on the cross said: “Lord, remember me when you come INTO Your

kingdom.” In other words, when you enter the Kingdom of God as a glorified Being. The *Revised Standard Version* states in an annotation that the passage can also be rendered: “... when you come **in** your Kingdom.” So also the *Luther Bible* (“... wenn du in dein Reich kommst”).

It is a mystery to many people as to WHAT the Kingdom of God is (Matthew 13:11).

Today we are co-workers for the Kingdom of God (Colossians 4:11); that is, we are co-workers for God—the Kingdom or ruling Family of God—and for His government which will be set up on earth soon.

As we will explain in more detail, we are to preach the gospel OF the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14)—the good news, which comes from God and which includes the message as to what God IS; that Christ will rule soon on earth; and that man can become God by inheriting, entering and becoming a part of the Kingdom or Family of God.

Chapter 4

The Kingdom of God and of Christ

The Bible speaks of God's Kingdom in different ways. But as we will see, there is no contradiction, nor are there separate or distinct Kingdoms.

Let us note several examples where the Bible speaks of the Kingdom of GOD:

In Mark 10:15, 25 we read that we must receive and enter the Kingdom of GOD. Mark 14:25 quotes Christ saying that He will drink wine in the Kingdom of GOD. He states in Luke 4:43 that He came to preach the Kingdom of GOD. He adds in Luke 6:20 that the poor are blessed because theirs is the Kingdom of GOD.

In Luke 7:28 He explains that everyone who will be in the Kingdom of GOD will be greater than any human being, including John the Baptist. Human beings—flesh and blood—cannot inherit the Kingdom of GOD, compare 1 Corinthians 15:50. As long as they are flesh and blood, they cannot enter it. They must be changed, compare verses 51–54. They must be born of water and Spirit, to be able to enter the Kingdom of GOD, compare John 3:5. As long as they are not born of the Spirit, they are flesh (verse 6), and unless born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of GOD (verse 3).

We are also warned, in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of GOD. In Luke 13:28–29, Christ speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets sitting in the Kingdom of GOD.

Let us note additional examples where the Bible speaks of the Kingdom of CHRIST:

In Luke 1:32–33 we read that of Christ's Kingdom there will be no end. We read in Colossians 1:13 that the Father has translated us into (that is, He has brought us under the dominion of) the Kingdom of the Son. 2 Timothy 4:1, 18 speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ and His

Kingdom. 2 Peter 1:11 says that an abundant entrance will be supplied to us into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We also read that it is God the FATHER's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom (Luke 12:32). Matthew 26:29 adds that Christ will drink wine again with the disciples in His Father's Kingdom. 1 Thessalonians 2:11–12 states that we should have a walk worthy of God the Father (compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1, showing that "God" is a reference here to "God the Father") who calls us into His own Kingdom and glory. Luke 22:29–30 says that Christ will bestow on the apostles a Kingdom, just as the Father bestowed one upon Him, that they may eat and drink at His table in His Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Ephesians 5:5 makes also very clear that the Kingdom is the Kingdom of God and of Christ: "... no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." Finally, we read in 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28, "Then comes the end, when He [Christ] delivers the kingdom to GOD THE FATHER, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power... then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

As Christ is God, and the Father is God, so the Kingdom of the Father is also the Kingdom of Christ. Both are Members of the Family of God.

Chapter 5

The Gospel OF the Kingdom

There is only ONE Gospel (Galatians 1:6–9)—and it is mostly called the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; 24:14; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 8:1; 9:2). It is also referred to as the Gospel OF Christ (Mark 1:1; Romans 1:9, 16; compare 2 Thessalonians 1:6–8)—not just ABOUT Christ. It is also identified as the Gospel OF God the Father (Romans 1:1).

God the Father is the Originator and Owner of the Gospel. He entrusted it to Christ to preach it here on earth. It is God's and Christ's Gospel which the Church is to proclaim today. Notice, it is not called the gospel ABOUT Christ or not even ABOUT God the Father; nor is it called the Gospel ABOUT the Kingdom of God. Rather, it is described as the Gospel OF God; OF Christ; and OF the Kingdom of God.

The differences are wide-ranging. The Gospel message is a message FROM God TO man—it is FOR man. It includes the truth about God the Father, about Christ, and about the Kingdom of God, but it is more encompassing than that. It shows man how he can ENTER the Kingdom of God.

To repeat: The Kingdom of God is the Family of God. God IS a RULING Family! The God Family—the God Kingdom—consists today, as it always did, of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. Both the Father and the Son are GOD. They ARE the Kingdom or Family of God. Converted Christians are NOT YET in the Kingdom or Family of God. They are Spirit-begotten children of God, to be BORN into the Kingdom of God at the time of Christ's return to this earth. Then, they too will be IN the Kingdom of God—the Family of GOD. Then, they will BE God.

In order to be IN the Kingdom of God, one must BE God. Man is NOT yet in the Kingdom—he is not yet God, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. But it is man's destiny to enter

into eternal life—into the Kingdom of God; to become a member of the Kingdom or RULING Family of God.

When we preach the Gospel OF the Kingdom of God, we preach the message which belongs to and originates with the KINGDOM of God—the Family of God. The everlasting or eternal Gospel is the message OF God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. It is the message OF the Kingdom of God—OF the God Family.

Now it should have become clear why we read about the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Father, and the Kingdom of Christ. God is a Family, consisting of the Father and the Son. God is a Kingdom, which also includes government and rule. Both the Father and the Son are God—they are Members of the Kingdom of God. It is a heavenly Kingdom. God the Father and Jesus Christ—the Kingdom of God—are ruling in and from heaven. But it will also be established on earth when Christ returns. The Kingdom of God—the Family of God—will BE and rule on earth—first through Christ, and later through the Father as well, when He comes to live on the new earth (Revelation 21:1–4).

The Bible teaches us very dogmatically that God IS a ruling Family, and that we can become born-again members of His Family—His Kingdom. There is only ONE Kingdom of God—one RULE. God the Father and Jesus Christ are not divided, but totally unified. They are “ONE.” It is the Kingdom of the Father—the HIGHEST in the God-head—and of the Son, because both are God, forming the Kingdom of God. To say it differently, the Kingdom or Family of God is composed of the Father and the Son. The Kingdom of God is a hierarchy, with God the Father on top and Jesus Christ under Him. But it is the great potential of man to become part of the God Kingdom and God Family—to become God, UNDER the Father and Christ, to enter and inherit the Kingdom of God as born-again immortal members and sons and daughters of God and His everlasting ruling Family.

The gospel OF the Kingdom of God is a gospel *originating with* the Kingdom of God—the ruling God Family. It is the gospel OF God the Father (Romans 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:8–9) and OF Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1).

Chapter 6

To Be Born Into the God Family

God is a GROWING Family. He wants to enlarge His Family by bringing many sons and daughters into His Family. When God gives His Holy Spirit to His followers, they become BEGOTTEN members of His Family. Those who are called to salvation in this day and age will be BORN into His Family—thereby becoming Spirit Beings and full-fledged God Beings—at the time of Christ’s return.

We need to begin our discussion on the destiny of man by addressing first the “born again” question.

Most professing Christians sincerely believe that they are already born again today. But they are sincerely wrong. The Bible does not teach this.

Not Yet Born Again

In John 3, Jesus Christ explained that no human being could be IN the Kingdom of God, and that in order to enter God’s Kingdom, one had to become a Spirit Being—a Member of the God Family. Jesus answered Nicodemus in John 3:3, 5–6, 8: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit... The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Christ could not possibly have spoken about a “born again” experience in this physical life. Notice it again: One who is born of the Spirit IS Spirit. He is like the wind which cannot be seen but can be felt—like a powerful hurricane or tornado. Christ also said that unless one is born again, he could not see nor enter the Kingdom of God. In other words, as long as someone is flesh and blood—not Spirit—he cannot see or enter God’s Kingdom.

Although we will be born again at the time of our resurrection or our change to immortality, something else must happen first so that we CAN become born again. The Bible describes this prior event as spiritual conception or “begettal.” Simply put, before we can be born again, we must be begotten again—a spiritual begettal. This spiritual begettal takes place at the time of our baptism, after repentance, and after coming to an understanding of, and belief in, Christ’s sacrifice and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. At the time of baptism, we then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands by true ministers of God, as a down payment—a guarantee (Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 5:5)— of our ultimate new birth at our resurrection to Spirit.

With the receipt of God’s Spirit, we acquire God’s divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), but there is still another step in the process. Just as an embryo must grow and develop, we must also grow spiritually and develop the fruit of the Spirit—the actual character of God. God considers those who have received His Spirit as being His children (2 Corinthians 6:17–18). Finally, Spirit-begotten children become SEPARATE SPIRIT BEINGS upon being born again—at their resurrection and change to immortality.

Notice Luke 20:35–36: “But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, BEING SONS OF THE RESURRECTION.” The rendition, “equal to the angels” is an incorrect interpretation. It is only used once in the New Testament and is translated from the Greek word *isaggelos*. It describes a figurative analogy in the sense that we cannot die any more as angels cannot die. But we are to judge and rule OVER angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). We will be born-again children of God when we have been resurrected—not before then. Christ calls us the “sons of the resurrection” for a reason!

Many claim, erroneously, that the Greek word, translated “born,” refers to a BIRTH prior to Christ’s return. However, they are mistaken. The Greek word is *gennaō* and means, “born” or “begotten”—depending on the context—and it can even describe the process from “begotten” to “being born”—the process of the entire “pregnancy,” lasting from conception until delivery. It is strictly the translator’s choice to use the

word “born” or “begotten,” when translating the Greek word, *gennaō*, but when the word “birth” is used for and applied to the “pregnancy” prior to the actual time of the “delivery,” then the translator made the wrong choice. In every such case, the expressions for “begotten” should have been used.

1 John 3:1–2 tells us: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

In the Image of God

God’s Word says that we will be LIKE Him. Many translations state that we will be “equal with Him.” (See the discussion below.) To most people, the very concept that we can be “like” or “equal with” God is a great mystery! But Colossians 1:15 explains to us that Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” The Greek word for “image” is *eikon*. It means, “likeness, representation, profile.” Christ said that he who sees Him sees the Father.

As Christ is the image of God the Father, so we are to become the image of Christ. Romans 8:29 says: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Paul elaborates further on the fantastic future change of man in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

We will actually become God, that is, a God Being—a full and total image of God the Father and Jesus Christ, much like a physical child is often recognized as being an image of his or her parents. Those who are called and chosen in this day and age are already [begotten] children of God, awaiting their change to a full Spirit Being at the return of Christ.

We Must Be Changed

Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15:50: “Now this I say, brethren,

that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Are you still human? If so, you cannot inherit the Kingdom of God as you are. So then, how can we enter the Kingdom? Paul explains in verses 51 and 52: "Behold, I tell you a mystery...we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." That is, how we can enter the Kingdom or FAMILY of God. Our human bodies need to be changed. But changed to what?

Verses 42–49 continue: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body... The first man [Adam] was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man [Jesus Christ] is the Lord from heaven... And as we have borne the image of the man of dust [human], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Spirit]."

To repeat: The Bible is very clear that whoever is in the Kingdom of God must actually be God. We must become God Beings, sharing in Christ's glory, the firstborn of many brethren. That is indeed a mystery that only very few understand today—that God is enlarging His Family. We are already called His children, but we have not been glorified yet. And when we are glorified at the time of our resurrection to eternal life, we will be entering the Kingdom of God, as literal God Beings, as glorified Sons and Daughters of God, made immortal. God the Father tells Jesus Christ in Genesis 1:26, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." God is a Family, and when He created man, He began His awesome work of adding to His Family. That we are to become members of the God Family, or God Beings, is clearly taught.

To Become God

God created man in His own image, according to His likeness. He did not create him as a Spirit Being, but from the dust of the ground. Man has to qualify to be changed into a Spirit Being and to enter the Kingdom or Family of God. So, for a while—during this life time—man is made lower than God, but in the resurrection, he will be like God (1 John 3:2). In fact, he will BE God and in that sense EQUAL with God [see the next chapter]—a Member of the God Family, a Child of

God the Father and a Brother or Sister of Jesus Christ, who is in the image of the Father (Hebrews 1:1–3) and who is God Himself (John 1:1). Man will share the divine nature of God—He will be equal with God, fully God, even though he will always be UNDER the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

In Psalm 17:15, we read about man’s potential: “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” David understood that we will look like God when we are resurrected. Also Philippians 3:20–21: “For our citizenship is in heaven [Our names are written in heaven, where God is. We belong to Him; we are His children. We belong to a different country, a heavenly government, which will come down to this earth when Christ returns.] ...from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” We already read that we shall bear the image of Christ, we will look like He does, in His glorified state.

But more than that—we will actually BE GOD BEINGS! Herbert W. Armstrong, the late human leader of the Church of God in the 20th century, wrote a book entitled, *“Mystery of the Ages.”* On page 170, he wrote: “Consider why God created mankind in the first place. God is reproducing Himself through man. He is creating in Man God’s own perfect holy and righteous spiritual character. And that, in turn, is purposed to restore the government of God over all the earth. And further, to create BILLIONS OF GOD BEINGS ...”

Today, the true Church of God is preaching and proclaiming this tremendous understanding in all the world as a witness to all nations. True converted Christians, who are still alive at the time of Christ’s return, will be changed from physical beings to immortal God Beings. They will become born-again Members of the very Family of God. The same is true for those who died in Christ and who will be resurrected from the dead, when Christ returns. They will also enter the Family of God as immortal God Beings at that time (compare Hebrews 11:39–40).

Those who have lived and died before Christ’s return, without ever having had an opportunity to accept Christ as their personal Savior and to receive the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, will be given such an opportunity at a later time—during the Second Resurrection or the “Great White Throne Judgment” period (compare Revelation 20:11–12). At

that time, they can also fulfill their potential and reach their destiny—if they make the right choice—to become immortal God Beings in the Family of God. THAT IS why God created all of mankind—to become GOD—born-again Members of the FAMILY OF GOD. And that is what the GOSPEL OF the Kingdom of God is all about—the message from the God Kingdom and Family to mankind.

Chapter 7

Equal with God

We have read several times that we will become God—Members of the Family of God—and that we will be equal with Christ. But what exactly does this mean?

Christ Is Equal with the Father

Philippians 2:3–8 reads as follows in the *Authorized Version*:

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

We read in Philippians 2:6–7, in the *Revised Standard Version*: “[Jesus Christ]... though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (better: retained), but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...”

This passage explains that Christ was in the “form of God” and “equal with God” the Father, but that He took the “form of a bondservant,” and came “in the likeness of men.”

We read in John 17:5 that Christ had glory before the world existed—showing that Christ existed as a glorious Being before the world was made. As Philippians 2:6 says, He existed as a divine Being—He was EQUAL with God and therefore God.

In John 5:18, we read that the Jews wanted to kill Christ “because He... said that GOD was His Father, making himself equal with GOD.”

The Greek word for “equal” is *isos* and does describe equality—

something, which is “the same as” something else—not in the sense of “identity,” but of equality. Note that in Acts 11:17, the same word is used.

When the Jews said that He “made himself” equal with God, they understood that He declared that He was God (compare John 10:33). He was God in the flesh—the “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us.” He is also described as the image of God (Colossians 1:13–15).

Man Is to Become Equal with the Father and Christ

1 John 3:1–2 tells us: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

God’s Word says that we will be LIKE Him. Many translations state that we will be “equal with Him.” The Greek word for “like” or “equal” is *homoios*. The *Lamsa* translation says: “... we shall be in his likeness.” *Young’s Literal Translation* states: “... like him we shall be.”

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* explains:

“.. we shall be like Him ... Christ whom we shall be like, is the ‘express image’ of the Father’s person, so that in resembling Christ, we shall resemble the Father.”

Romans 8:29 says: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...” 2 Corinthians 3:18 adds: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

We are to obtain Christ’s glory (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14) and the glory of the Father (1 Peter 5:10). Christ’s glory is to be in us (John 17:22, 5). Our lowly, physical and temporary body is to be conformed (having the same form) to His eternal glorious body (Philippians 3:20–2).

The Greek word for “conform” (*summorphoo* or, as a noun, *summorphos*) is derived from a word which can mean, “nature”.

We will actually become God, that is, a God Being—a full and total image of God the Father and Jesus Christ, much like a physical child

is often recognized as being an image of his or her parents. Those who are called and chosen in this day and age are already [begotten] children of God, awaiting their change to a full Spirit Being at the return of Christ.

We Are to Obtain Sonship from God the Father

Unfortunately, the *Authorized Version* and many other English translations render the Greek word for “sonship” with “adoption.” Note, for example, Romans 8:14–17, 23; Galatians 4:4–7; and Ephesians 1:3–5. In all these passages, the choice of the word “adoption” is wrong and needs to be replaced with the word “sonship.” We read in Matthew 5:9 that we are to be the “sons of God.” Romans 8:14 confirms that we are sons of God, if we are being led by the Spirit of God. The term “sons of God” includes “daughters of God” (2 Corinthians 6:18), and so the Bible also speaks of “the children of God” (Romans 8:16–17)—but not “adopted” children.”

Strong’s Concordance says that the word designates “sonship” in respect to God.

The *Phillips* translation renders Romans 8:23 as follows: “... at last we have realized our full sonship in him.” *Moffat* says: “... wait for the redemption of the body, that means our full sonship.” And the *Amplified Bible* says in respect to one of the alternative renderings: “... our manifestation as God’s sons.”

The *Literal Emphasis Translating* says: “eagerly awaiting sonship.” *Weymouth* states: “... as we wait and long for open recognition as sons.” The *Coverdale Bible* of 1535 reads: “... grown within ourselves for the childship...”

The *Luther Bible*, the *Elberfelder Bible* and the *Menge Bible* translate consistently, “sonship” [“Sohnschaft”] or “childship” [“Kindschaft”].

As “sons” or “children” of God, we will be, by nature, “equal” with Him, resembling Him as His true sons and daughters.

As Christ was, in that sense, equal with God before He became a man (Philippians 2:5–6), and as He obtained again that equality with God, when He was resurrected to an immortal God Being, so will we be.

Christ said that God the Father is greater than He (John 14:28). So, there is different authority even within the Family of God (1 Corinthians 11:3). BUT it is also said that God the Father and Jesus Christ

are "ONE" (John 10:30), and that they are "EQUAL" (John 5:18; Philippians 2:6). They are both God Beings, sharing the same glory and essence. And even though Christ will always be the FIRSTBORN among many brethren and He will, therefore, always be higher in authority than any of His born-again brethren, they will still become EQUAL with Christ and with God the Father. Different levels of authority do not make a being superior or inferior.

When we are sons of God, we are also sons of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:38), showing once again that the Kingdom of God is the FAMILY of God, with God the Father being the highest in the Family.

Chapter 8

No Other God(s)

How are we to understand [Isaiah 43:10](#), where the LORD says, “Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me?” Doesn’t this contradict the teaching that it is the potential of man to become God?

We have seen that it is indeed the potential of man to become God—a full-fledged God Being in the Family of God. This teaching was already revealed in Old Testament times, even though most did not comprehend what was actually said.

The context of Isaiah 43:10 shows that God speaks of idols which pagans worship, and sadly, Israel had begun to adopt such pagan worship as well, as our modern non-Christian and Christian nations do today. In the context of idolatry, God says in Isaiah 43:12: “I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, And there was no FOREIGN GOD among you.”

God’s statements in Isaiah 43:10 that there was no God “formed” before the true God, and that there will be no other God after Him, refers to foreign gods OUTSIDE THE GOD FAMILY.

God is not negating the fact that He is enlarging His Family, but He is emphasizing that no one outside His Family can make any claim of being or becoming God. Many human leaders asserted that they were God or “gods” or divine, and in the future, two powerful individuals will make similar false claims. In addition, many non-Christians and nominal Christians worship “deities” or “saints” or the “Virgin Mary,” but God says that none of them must be worshipped.

The Beast and the False Prophet

Please notice what is prophesied to occur in the not-too-distant future. The beast (a political and military leader) as well as the false prophet—a religious leader, who is also associated with the “image of

the beast”—will be worshipped by most people, implying that they will be considered as “gods” (Revelation 13:4, 12, 15; 14:11).

We read that the beast, also referred to as the king of the North, will “magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods... He shall regard neither the God of his fathers... nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver... Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory...” (Daniel 11:36–39).

The beast and the false prophet will work together. The beast, himself claiming to be divine, will honor and acknowledge (not necessarily “worship”) the false prophet as a foreign god. Both of them will claim to be gods or divine.

In fact, the false prophet, also referred to as the “man of sin” or the “lawless one” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8, will sit “as God in the temple of God” (a future temple in Jerusalem), “showing himself” or proclaiming that he is God (verse 4). This false religious leader is also described in Ezekiel 28, where he is called the “PRINCE of Tyre” (verse 2). It says there that his heart will be lifted up, and he claims: “I am a god, I sit in the midst of gods” (same verse). But God answers him: “Yet you are a man, and not a god” (same verse). He also tells him about his death, asking, “Will you still say before him [better: “before Him”] who slays you, ‘I am a god’? But you shall be a man and not a god” (verse 9).

Of course, the false prophet operates under the direct influence and possession of Satan the devil. Satan is referred to as the “KING of Tyre” (Ezekiel 28:12). When he was known as the cherub Lucifer, he became proud and decided that he wanted to replace the true God and become (like) the Most High and a god or God himself (Ezekiel 28:12–17; Isaiah 14:12–15). And it is Satan the devil who will give his power and authority to the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 13:4; 12:9).

But we also read that God will destroy the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire—these “gods” will die, because they are mere men, and God is much more powerful than they. And God will also deal with Satan who uses them (Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:1–3, 7–10).

Foreign Gods

Returning to Isaiah 43:10, many commentaries understand that in that passage, God is not addressing His relationship with His followers and their potential, but His relationship with foreign gods and idols.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible has the following comment:

"[The Israelites] were his witnesses, because, first, he had given [to] them predictions of future events which had been literally fulfilled: secondly, by his power of delivering them so often manifested, he had shown that he was a God able to save. Neither of these had been done by the idol-gods... *Yahweh* says that he was the first being. He derived his existence from no one. Perhaps the Hebrew will bear a little more emphasis than is conveyed by our translation. 'Before me, God was not formed,' implying that he was God, and that he existed anterior to all other beings. It was an opinion among the Greeks, that the same gods had not always reigned, but that the more ancient divinities had been expelled by the more modern. It is possible that some such opinion may have prevailed in the oriental idolatry, and that God here means to say, in opposition to that, that he had not succeeded any other God in his kingdom. His dominion was original, underived, and independent.

"Neither shall there be after me' – He would never cease to live; he would never vacate his throne for another. This expression is equivalent to that which occurs in the Book of Revelation, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last' (Revelation 1:11), and it is remarkable that this language, which obviously implies eternity, and which in Isaiah is used expressly to prove the divinity of *Yahweh*, is, in the passage referred to in the Book of Revelation, applied no less unequivocally to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible adds: "...before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me'; intimating that idols were formed by the hands of men, and yet none of these were formed before him, and therefore could make no pretensions to deity, or to an equality with him; nor should any be formed afterwards, that could be put in competition with him..."

Wesley's Notes read: "The gods of the Heathens neither had a being before me nor shall continue after me: whereas the Lord is God from everlasting to everlasting; but these pretenders are but of yesterday.

And withal he calls them formed gods, in a way of contempt, and to shew the ridiculousness of their pretence.”

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* states: “‘formed’—before I existed none of the false gods were formed. ‘Formed’ applies to the idols, not to God.”

Matthew Henry’s Whole Bible Commentary adds: “The idols were but of yesterday, new gods that came newly up (Deuteronomy 32:17); but the God of Israel was from everlasting... ‘there was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me.’ The idols were gods formed (*dii facti*—made gods, or rather *fictitii*—fictitious); by nature they were no gods, Galatians 4:8... God will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are famished and abolished and idolatry shall be no more.”

God warns all of us not to worship or pray to any idols or gods, but to strictly and exclusively worship the true God—God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We are not to worship anyone or anything outside the God Family. In His timeless Ten Commandments, God tells us: “I am the LORD your God... You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2–3).

Only ONE God Being?

Some claim and teach that God is NOT a Family, consisting of TWO Beings, but that He is just One Being. They refer to biblical passages, which state that God is ONE.

First, we need to understand from the context what is meant with “one.” Christ said that the Father and He are ONE (John 10:30). Christ was not saying that the Father and He were one Being. Rather, He addressed the concept of complete unity between the Father and Him. There was and always will be total harmony between the two members of the God Family. In fact, Christ won a legal argument with the Pharisees by proving that the Father and He, although “one,” were TWO Beings (John 8:17–18).

Christ prayed to the Father that His disciples should become “one” (John 17:20–23). He did not pray that they should all become one Being, but that they should become totally unified. We also read that Adam and Eve were to become “one” flesh (Genesis 2:24). Again, they were not to become one being. We can learn from these examples that

Christ's disciples, or Adam and Eve, were to reach, or achieve, oneness in mindset, in purpose, and in action.

Some claim that Scriptures like Deuteronomy 6:4 reject the concept that God is more than one Being. However, this is not the case.

Deuteronomy 6:4 reads: "Hear, O Israel, The LORD [*Yahweh*] our God, the LORD [*Yahweh*] is one!" Many perceive that this Scripture teaches monotheism—that is, the existence of only one God. And indeed, it does. There is only one God. But God is a Family, consisting of more than one Being. Since God does not contradict Himself in His Word, what can we learn from Deuteronomy 6:4? *Yahweh* is one Being. The Being who dealt directly with Israel was Jesus Christ (see discussion below). He was called *Yahweh*—He was and is one Being. So, it is true that *Yahweh*—Jesus Christ—is one Being.

In addition, *Yahweh* refers to the Father as well—and the Father is, of course, also one Being. Thirdly, since *Yahweh* refers to both the Father and the Son, they are also "one"—one in purpose, goal, mindset, willpower and determination. They are unified. There is no division in the God Family.

Further, many commentaries, including the Jewish Bible or *Tanakh*, feel that the passage in Deuteronomy 6:4 should be translated, "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone." This would make sense too, given the fact that both God the Father and Jesus Christ are referred to as "LORD" or *Yahweh* in Scripture (Compare Zechariah 2:8–11; 4:8–9; 6:9, 12–15 in the *New King James Bible*). In this sense, the prohibition is against worshipping other gods. Deuteronomy 6:4 definitively DOES NOT teach that there is only one God Being, as this would contradict all the other Scriptures in the Bible that establish a duality in the Godhead.

To elaborate, let us review several commentaries to see how they understand this passage, based on the original Hebrew. Bear in mind, however, that the commentaries that we will quote believe in the false concept of the Trinity—one God in three Persons—whereas the Bible teaches that God is a Family, consisting of TWO Persons, not three.

Plurality in the Godhead

Still, the following commentaries do understand that there is a PLURALITY in the Godhead and that Deuteronomy 6:4 actually

teaches this plurality, rather than the concept that the God Family is just one BEING.

For instance, the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary* states:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord—or, as the words may perhaps be better translated, ‘Hear, O Israel: Jehovah [our comment: *Yahweh* is the better rendition of the Hebrew *YHWH* than Jehovah] is our God (*Elohim*, plural), Jehovah alone’... The basis of their religion was an acknowledgment of the UNITY of God... it is observable that a belief in the UNITY of God was a fundamental principle not of their faith only, but of their political constitution. The social fabric in all other contemporary nations rested upon the assumed truth of polytheism...”

The *New Unger’s Bible Handbook* adds:

“This is the most significant verse for orthodox Jews, who call it *Shema* after the first word, ‘Hear!’ ‘The Lord [*YHWH*] our God, the Lord is ONE,’ the one, ‘*ehad*,’ expressing COMPOUND UNITY not ‘*yahid*,’ meaning a single one, thus not supporting Jewish and Unitarian denial of the Trinity [better, the duality in the Godhead]...”

Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible states:

“Hear, O Israel... *shema Yisrael, Yehovah Eloheinu, Yehovah achad*... Many think that Moses teaches in these words the doctrine of the Trinity [better: duality] in Unity. It may be so; but if so, it is not more clearly done than in the first verse of Genesis [where we read that God—“*elohim*” in Hebrew—created the heavens and the earth]... When this passage occurs in the Sabbath readings in the synagogue, the whole congregation repeat [*sic*] the last word... *achad* for several minutes together with the loudest vociferations... but all their skill... can never prove that there is not a plurality expressed in the word... *Eloheinu*, which is translated our God... It would apply more forcibly in the way of conviction to the Jews of the plurality of persons in the Godhead, than the word *achad*, of one... Some Christians have joined the Jews against this doctrine, and some have even outdone them, and have put themselves to extraordinary pains to prove that... *Elohim* is a noun of the singular number! This has not yet been proved. It would be as easy to prove that there is no plural in language.”

Gill’s Exposition of the Bible states:

“These are the words of Moses, stirring up the people to an

attention to what he was about to say of this great and momentous article, the UNITY of God, to prevent their going into polytheism and idolatry... they no ways [i.e., in no way] contradict the doctrine of a trinity [better: duality] of persons in the unity of the divine essence, the Father [and the] Word... which [two] are one; the one God, the one Jehovah, as here expressed..."

Deuteronomy 6:4 does not teach that there is only one God BEING. Rather, Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament (see discussion below), in expressing the direct mandate from God the Father, warned the Israelites not to practice idolatry and polytheism, but to recognize and worship the one true God who led them out of the land of Egypt (compare Exodus 20:2-3). It is true that at that time, most Israelites did not even understand that God is a Family, and they falsely believed that Jesus—the God Being dealing directly with them—was God the Father.

One might ask, why would God the Father have allowed the Israelites to worship and pray to the Word, Jesus Christ, erroneously thinking that they were worshipping God the Father? This was all part of God's great plan. When Adam and Eve sinned, they cut themselves off (and man in general) from God the Father (see below). It would be Jesus Christ who was to deal directly with the ancients and the nation of Israel in Old Testament times. Though some of the ancients understood that God is a Family, consisting of the Father and the Son, most did not. But even those who understood dealt directly with Christ—as mentioned above, none of them has ever heard the voice of the Father or has seen His form. However, there is, always has been, and always will be complete love, unity and harmony within the Godhead, and God the Father was in no way "jealous" of His Son, when Israel worshipped Christ instead of Him.

Christ came to this earth to teach very clearly that His disciples are to worship God the FATHER in spirit and in truth, and that they are to pray to Him, but they are told to do so in Christ's name. Christ made it clear that the Father is the highest Personage within the God Family. Again, there is no jealousy within the God Family, and Christ is most certainly not jealous of the Father that it had to be revealed that He, rather than Christ, must be prayed to. Christ will always recognize His Father as the Highest, but remember, God is one. The Members of the God Family live without any jealousy towards each other. They live in

love, harmony and complete unity with each other.

Deuteronomy 6:4 does not negate the existence of two Beings within the God Family, but it emphasizes the UNITY of the true God. It also includes the timeless prohibition against a belief in polytheism (consisting many times of pagan gods fighting each other) and against the worship of other gods beside or instead of the one true God (Family).

No Other Gods

How, then, are we to understand Isaiah 45:5, where the LORD says, "I am God, and there is no other?"

In Isaiah 45, "the LORD" (*Yahweh* in Hebrew) speaks to Cyrus and tells him that he will be an instrument in God's hands to fulfill His Will. He specifically prophesies that and how Cyrus will conquer Babylon (compare verse 1) and that he will allow Jerusalem to be rebuilt and Judah to be released from captivity (compare verse 13). He also emphasizes that Cyrus did not know God, when He called him for his special mission (verses 3–5).

It appears that Cyrus was an idol worshipper of the Persian sun god Mythra (whose day of worship was Sunday, and whose birthday was celebrated on December 25). He apparently also worshipped the Babylonian god Marduk. It is in that context, that the LORD (*Yahweh*) says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me" (verse 5, compare verse 6).

It is true that *Yahweh's* comments are more encompassing than just referring to Cyrus. He repeats His claim that He is God, and that there is no other God besides Him, in several verses throughout the chapter (verses 14, 18, 21, 22; compare also Isaiah 46:9).

All these passages deal with the true God in contrast with false "gods" or idols. The "LORD" is stating that He created the universe and everything that exists; that He is carrying out His Will and that His prophecies will come to pass; and that no other "god" had or will have any part in any of this. But does this mean, as some have suggested, that Isaiah taught that there was only one God Being—the "LORD"?

The "LORD"

As we saw, the word "LORD" (*Yahweh*) can refer to any one of the two Beings within the God Family. Although normally referring to Jesus

Christ, it can also refer to God the Father. It is therefore obvious that when the LORD says that He is “God,” and that there is no other, this must be referring to either one and including both of the two Person-ages, who are both identified as “LORD.” The word for “God” is *elohim* in the Hebrew, describing a (family) unit. Remember, God (*elohim*) said in the beginning: “Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness...” (Genesis 1:26). Here, God (*elohim*) is used as a plural word, describing a unity of more than one Being.

The LORD—whether the reference is to the Father or to the Son—is declaring that He—as the representative of the God Family—is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. God the Father created everything through Jesus Christ (compare Colossians 1:12–16). No other god or idol must be worshipped or thought of as having participated in any creation process. The Father and the Son are “one”—totally unified in approach, purpose and goal—so that when the One speaks, He speaks likewise for the Other.

Several commentaries have clearly understood that the passages in Isaiah 45, as quoted above, do not teach that God consists of only one Person. For example, we read in Isaiah 45:22 that *Yahweh* says: “Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”

Clarke’s Commentary to the Bible states:

“This verse and the following contain a plain prediction of the universal spread of the knowledge of God through Christ; and so the Targum appears to have understood it; see Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10. The reading of the Targum is remarkable, viz. [that is], ... look to my Word, ... the Lord Jesus.”

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible adds:

“‘Look unto me’.... And not to idols, nor to any creature, nor to the works of your hands... all must be looked off of, and Christ only looked unto... He is to be looked unto as the Son of God, whose glory is the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; as the only Mediator between God and man; as the Saviour and Redeemer... ‘for I am God, and there is none else’; and so mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost, all that come to him, and to God by him, be they where they will; since he is truly God...”

These commentaries explain that *Yahweh*, who is speaking here, is actually Jesus Christ; they also understand that Christ is God—but not the only God Being, of course, because the FATHER later impregnated Mary with the Christ Child through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:30–35).

Christ—*Yahweh*—exclaims that He is God, and there is no other—not in reference to God the Father, but in reference to pagan idols and gods who were invented through the maneuvering and under the influence of Satan the devil to create a substitute for Jesus Christ. That is the reason why pagans believed in Savior “sun-gods,” such as Mythra or Attis, who died around Easter time, on a Friday, and who were believed to have come back to life on a Sunday.

Sadly, orthodox Christianity absorbed those pagan concepts and applied them to Christ, claiming that Christ was born on December 25; that He was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday; and that He must be worshipped today on a Sunday. All these unbiblical practices and beliefs are of pagan origin, and the Bible strongly condemns this kind of syncretism (Deuteronomy 12:29–32).

Likewise, we read in Isaiah 46:9, that *Yahweh* says: “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.”

Again, this is not teaching that there is only one God Being, but that we must not worship any pagan gods, as they are of no relevance.

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible remarks:

“Remember the former things of old... which are so many proofs of the true deity of the God of Israel, in opposition to the idols of the Gentiles...”

Isaiah does not teach that there is only one God Being, but that both the Father and the Son, referred to as *Yahweh*, are members of the one true God Family. Isaiah also teaches that no “god” or “idol” must be viewed as a helpful way to salvation; rather, whatever is not of, or belonging to the true God, is to be avoided and rejected.

Chapter 9

Jesus—THE God of the Old Testament

Colossians 1:16 states that “all things”—visible and invisible—were created “by” and “through” Jesus Christ. We see in John 1:1–3 that “all things” were made through the Word—the Logos—Jesus Christ; and Hebrews 1:1–2; 2:10 tells us that God the Father made “the worlds” or the entire universe and “all things” “through” Jesus Christ.

This shows that it was Jesus Christ who created Adam and Eve.

Jesus Christ spoke of His own pre-existence over and over again. At one time, He stated boldly that He—AS God—had lived before Abraham. The Jews were so outraged that they were willing to stone Jesus. Notice the dialogue and the reaction of the Jews to Christ’s words in John 8:56–58: “[Jesus said,] ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’”

When Jesus said, “I AM,” rather than, “I WAS,” the Jews understood that He identified Himself as God—as “Yahweh,” the “I AM” or Eternal of the Old Testament. That is why they “took up stones to throw at Him” (verse 59).

The Jews of Christ’s time rejected Him as fulfilling the office of Messiah and the King of Israel. However, prophecy in the books of the Old Testament pointed to the fact that it would be God who would come to deliver them (compare Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23). Jesus told the Jews, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). In another instance, following His resurrection, Jesus showed some of His disciples these very proofs: “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27).

In addition, in Luke 10:18, Jesus said that He saw Satan fall like

lightning from heaven, claiming that He existed when Satan's rebellion occurred, which happened long before the creation of man.

The Bible shows that Jesus Christ existed, as a GOD Being, prior to His appearance as a Man over 2,000 years ago.

The Jews at the time of Christ did not know—and most still don't know today—that God is a Family, presently consisting of two God Beings. Christ came to REVEAL the Father to them (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). The Jews thought they knew the Father, not realizing that the God of the Old Testament, who directly worked with and dealt with Israel, was Jesus Christ—not God the Father.

We read in John 1:18 that “no one has seen God at any time.” John 5:37 confirms that “you have neither heard His [the Father's] voice at any time, nor seen His form.” Again, we read in John 6:46: “Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God,” that is, Jesus Christ. Finally, 1 John 4:12 repeats, “No one has seen God at any time.”

God Spoke to Israel

Still, we read that God did appear to the ancient Israelites. They did hear His voice many times. Some even saw the form of God, to an extent, in His glorified state (compare Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:11, 17–23; 34:6–8; Numbers 12:8; Deuteronomy 34:10; Isaiah 6:1–10; Ezekiel 1:26–28; 3:23; 8:4). It was the Spirit of CHRIST which dwelled in the prophets of old, as 1 Peter 1:10–11 clearly proves: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST [WHICH] WAS IN THEM was indicating when [it] testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”

According to biblical testimony, some did see “God” in Old Testament times, and they did hear His voice. On the other hand, Christ and the apostles taught that no human has ever seen or heard the voice of “God.” Since God does not contradict Himself in His Word, He is obviously talking about two different Personages here. Indeed, the Bible clarifies that no one has ever seen God the Father (compare again John 5:37; 6:46). But some did see “God”—that is, the second Being in the God Family—Jesus Christ, in His glorified state.

The Bible confirms that it was Jesus Christ who appeared to people

and spoke with them in Old Testament times (compare John 8:56–58; 1 Corinthians 10:4, 9). In doing so, the Bible emphasizes again that Jesus Christ was GOD before He became a Man, and that God is a Family, consisting of God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. It was, in fact, Christ who dealt directly with Israel.

From this it follows that Jesus Christ was THE God of the Old Testament in that it was HE who dealt with the people and who was worshipped by the people who did not even KNOW of the existence of the Father. It is true that those few who were called to salvation in Old Testament times did know about the Father, but this is not true for the overwhelming majority of mankind. God simply did not give them the understanding to know. Even those who studied the Old Testament Scriptures did not understand (Matthew 22:29; *New Jerusalem Bible*), and Christ had to open up the understanding of the Scriptures to His own disciples (Luke 24:45).

It is true, of course, that righteous people in the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets, knew about the Father, but this is not true for the overwhelming majority, nor for the Jews living at the time of Jesus. For instance, Acts 3:13 states that the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus.” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob understood that their God was the Father, who would later glorify Jesus Christ, the Son.

Still, Christ, as the Son of God, had to come to reveal the Father, even though the Old Testament clearly revealed His existence. References to “the Father” in the Old Testament can be found in Isaiah 63:16; Malachi 1:6; 2:10; 2 Samuel 7:13–14; 1 Chronicles 22:10; and Deuteronomy 32:6.

In those passages, Christ—the “Word” or Spokesman for the Father—communicated to the people the words of the Father. When the Bible speaks of the “Father,” it normally refers strictly and exclusively to the highest God Being in the God Family.

However, the Jews were under the misimpression that they were worshipping “the Father.” They did not understand that the God Being functioning as the Messenger or Spokesperson of the Father and the God Family, who had been dealing directly with the ancients, was actually Jesus Christ. (Compare Christ’s words in John 8:54, “It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.”)

A Voice from Heaven

We have explained that Jesus' words that no one has seen the form of God and that people did not hear the voice of God refer to God the Father, as people did see the form of the Son of God—Jesus Christ (compare again Numbers 12:8), and they did hear His voice. It was Christ who communicated and spoke the words of the Father. This makes sense for Old Testament passages, but what about the fact that people heard a voice from heaven about Jesus Christ when Christ was here on earth? This voice could not have been the voice of Christ.

Nor could it have been the voice of the Father, because we read later that people did NOT hear the voice of God (the Father) at any time. It is also quite ridiculous to assume that God the Father just formed an audible voice for the occasion, which He otherwise did not have.

Referring to the account of Christ's baptism through John the Baptist, Matthew 3:17 says: "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Another account can be found in John 12:28–29, shortly before His betrayal:

"[Christ prayed:] 'Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.' Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to Him.' Jesus answered and said, 'This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.'"

Also, when Christ and some of His disciples were on the Mount of Transfiguration, Matthew 17:5 records: "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Peter would later reflect on that experience in 2 Peter 1:17–18: "For He [Jesus] received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

How are we to understand these passages?

Angels Communicate God's Words

In his comments, *Gill* refers to the possibility of angels ministering to the people.

Already in Old Testament times, we read that an angel spoke on behalf of God, voicing the command of God. We read in Zechariah 6:5–8 (*Authorized Version*):

“And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.”

Even though an angel speaks to Zechariah, it says that “my spirit” has been quieted—an obvious reference to God’s Holy Spirit. So, the angel is communicating God’s words to the prophet, but it appears as if God spoke directly to Zechariah.

In the New Testament, we read the angelic message, “the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:9–10), coming from God the Father and Jesus Christ, in Revelation 22:8–16 (*Authorized Version*):

“And I John saw these things, and heard [them]. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See [thou do it] not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward [is] with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without [are] dogs,

and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, [and] the bright and morning star.”

In the passage above, we see that the message of the angel contains the direct words of Jesus Christ, but it is the angel who communicates these words to John. In fact, the message is from God the Father, given to Christ who gave it to the angel to communicate to John (Revelation 1:1). In the same way, an angel communicated the words of the Father to the people when the voice of the angel said: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

It is true, of course, that some people saw God the Father in visions (Daniel 7:9–10; Revelation 1:12–16; 4:2–11; 5:1; Acts 7:55–58), but they never saw Him face to face, in His glory. There are reasons for that.

Cut Off From God

When Adam and Eve sinned, God cut them off from access to the Tree of Life, which symbolized the Holy Spirit and with it, spiritual understanding. In addition, all mankind was cut off from such access except for those being specifically predestined to be called prior to Christ’s return. The fact that mankind was cut off from God was God’s punishment for Adam and Eve’s disobedience—a direct consequence of Adam and Eve’s conduct. After they sinned, the Tree of Life was no longer accessible to them and in general, to mankind as a whole, and mankind was allowed, under the sway and deception of Satan, to create his own societies, which are ALL in opposition to God’s Way of Life.

Today, the entire world is under Satan’s rule. This includes ALL countries, including the United States of America, South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Great Britain, continental Europe, the Middle East and the Far East, including India, Russia, China, Japan and Korea. This means, no human government today is righteous in God’s eyes. This is one reason WHY true Christians are to come out of the “Babylon” of this world and its politics; to be separate; and not to touch or associate with or embrace or adopt or feed on the uncleanness of this world’s economic, military, educational or religious systems.

Adam and Eve’s sin DID do something to this world. The concept

of “inherited” original sin is clearly wrong—but notice what DID happen when they sinned. In a brief article in the *Plain Truth* magazine of September 1963, the following is accurately explained: “... Adam and Eve... sinned. They were driven from the Garden of Eden. By sinning, they cut themselves off from the guidance, authority and knowledge of God (Gen. 3:24). Adam not only cut himself off—he was responsible for cutting his children off—from the help and instruction of God. Even his own son became a murderer (Gen. 4:8)... So Adam’s sin was unique in that it was the first human sin—it was he who cut man off from God... We have not been forced to sin because Adam sinned!”

But the sad fact is that we all followed Adam’s wrong example: We all sinned and brought upon us the penalty of ETERNAL death, and so we read that “by the one man’s offense many died” (Romans 5:15), and “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Romans 5:19).

So it is true that due to Adam and Eve’s conduct, humanity was cut off “from God” in the sense that they would not have access to the Holy Spirit and with it, godly understanding, unless specifically drawn and chosen by God the Father to be brought to Christ (John 6:44, 65).

Today, the world as a whole is cut off from God and is subject to the rule of Satan. God placed Lucifer on the throne of this earth, with responsibility for properly governing it, but he rebelled and became known as Satan. When Satan inspired Adam and Eve to turn against God—to sin by going against what God instructed them—God gave mankind 6,000 years to find out for themselves that they cannot live without God. And for that same 6,000-year duration, God has decreed that Satan would remain on his throne. That 6,000-year period will end at the return of Jesus Christ, who will come to replace Satan—a failed ruler—and restore the government of God on this earth.

But with Adam and Eve’s decision to eat from the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, another important and often overlooked consequence needs to be addressed as well. Because, even though we saw that mankind was cut off from God in respect to the Holy Spirit and access to God, we also saw that Jesus Christ DID deal and work with humans, including the nations of Israel and Judah. Christ did not deal with them by offering them access to the Holy Spirit and an opportunity for salvation (this will occur later, in the Great White

Throne judgment period), but He DID speak to them and showed Himself to them. It was Christ who spoke the Ten Commandments to the ancient Israelites—not the Father. And even though Christ—as the Spokesman—acted on behalf of the Father, most did not even understand that the Father existed. That is why Christ, when He came as a Man, had to reveal the Father to the average Jews.

Cut Off from God the FATHER

And that is why it is correct to say that Jesus Christ was THE God of the Old Testament, as it was HE who was worshipped. To say that the Father was the God of the Old Testament is misleading, as it wrongly conveys that the Father dealt with the people and was worshipped by them. This was not the case, as Adam and Eve's sin cut them and mankind [in general] off from access to God the Father.

In Herbert W. Armstrong's book, *"Mystery of the Ages,"* we read the following on pages 128–129, under "Humans, Cut Off from God?":

"The Person in the God family who spoke with Adam was the Logos or 'Word' who was later born as Jesus Christ. Adam had no contact with God the Father. When the WORD closed the tree of life, all mankind was cut off from God the Father until Christ would come to earth in supreme power and glory to take from Satan the throne of the earth and to restore the government of God over the entire earth. Meanwhile Christ, the second Adam, came at his first appearing to reveal the existence of God the Father (Luke 10:22). Until that time, the world had no knowledge of the existence of God the Father. That is one reason the religion of Judaism had believed that God consists of ONE PERSON only. That is the reason theologians have lost, or rather never possessed, knowledge of the fact that GOD is a FAMILY into which we may be born as part of that very God family. That, also, explains why, on reading the New Testament of God the Father, and also of Jesus being God, they came up with the false theory of the Holy Spirit being a 'Ghost', or third Person of a Trinity..."

Also, the following is stated on pages 144–145:

"At this point, remember, the world had never known of the existence of God the Father until Jesus came and revealed the Father (Matt. 11:27). The world, from its foundation, was cut off from God the Father. Jesus came to reconcile repentant believers to the Father (Rom. 5:10)."

And so, the world has been cut off from God the Father, the HIGHEST of the Godhead, as well as the knowledge as to who God the Father and Jesus Christ are. The Father did not deal directly with mankind, and He was not generally worshipped by the overwhelming majority, including those who read but did not understand the Scriptures. No one has ever seen the Father or heard His voice. It was Christ who showed Himself to and dealt with the people. It was He who was THE God of the Old Testament.

Chapter 10

The Spirit of the Father and of Christ

Is the Holy Spirit, which dwells in converted Christians, the Spirit of the Father or of Christ, or of both?

This question is related to the issue of “single procession” or “double procession” of the Holy Spirit, which is hotly debated in orthodox Christianity. For instance, while the Roman Catholic or Latin Church believes and teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the (Greek) Orthodox Eastern Church believes and teaches that it only proceeds from the Father, but that it is given through the Son. As both Churches believe in the concept of the Trinity (one God in three Persons, erroneously believing that the Holy Spirit is a Person), their explanation of the procession of the Holy Spirit is, by necessity, flawed.

When Christ was here on earth as a human being, it was the Spirit of God the Father which dwelled in Him. Prior to His human conception, the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11)—as well as the Spirit of the Father—dwelled in God’s prophets and others in Old Testament times, and subsequent to Christ’s resurrection, both His Spirit and the Spirit of the Father dwell in converted Christians who are called to salvation.

The Spirit of the Father

Let us first see that it was the Holy Spirit of God the Father which dwelled in the human being, Jesus Christ, when He lived here on earth.

We read in Luke 4:18–19 that Jesus, when He quoted the prophet Isaiah in a synagogue in Nazareth, applied the following passage to Himself: “The Spirit of the LORD [in this case, the LORD refers to God the Father] is upon Me [Jesus Christ], Because He [the Father] has anointed Me [Jesus] to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To preach deliverance to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are

oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.” Referring to Himself, He told His audience: “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (verse 21).

He healed the sick through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 5:17; 6:19; 8:46), but it was not His power, but the power of the Father’s Spirit in Him. Christ said that of Himself, He could do nothing (John 5:19, 30; 14:10–11). It was the Spirit of God the Father, dwelling in Christ without measure or limitation (John 3:34; *Authorized Version*), which gave Him the power to perform miracles. Acts 10:38 reads: “God [the Father] anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God [the Father] was with Him.” We also read that God the Father was in Christ [through the Holy Spirit] during His suffering (2 Corinthians 5:19), giving Him the strength to endure.

When He was here on earth as a human being, He had no Holy Spirit (of His own) to give to others, as He was not a glorified God Being (compare John 7:38–39). At that time, only the Holy Spirit of the Father was in existence or available, and it was the Father’s Holy Spirit that dwelled in Christ.

When the New Testament speaks of God, it is foremost referring to God the Father, but it is true, of course, that Jesus Christ is also God and referred to as such on several occasions. In Romans 9:5, Christ is called “the eternally blessed God” “who is over all” human beings. In Titus 2:13, Jesus Christ is called our “great God and Savior.” In Hebrews 1:8–9, Christ, the Son of God, is also called “God,” and it is stated that His God—God the Father—anoined Him with the oil of gladness. John 1:18 states that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, is God and has made the Father known to us (compare *New International Version*).

Still, in most cases, when speaking about God, the reference in the New Testament is to the Father (compare 1 Corinthians 3:23). And so we see repeatedly and consistently that the Holy Spirit of God the Father dwells in converted Christians. God the Father revealed the Truth to us through HIS Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10). We have received the Spirit which is from God the Father “that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” the Father (verse 12).

We read that we are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God (the Father) dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is repeated in

1 Corinthians 6:19–20: "... your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit [which] is in you, [which] you have from God, and you are not your own. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Again, we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:8 that God (the Father) has given us HIS Holy Spirit, and 1 John 4:12–13 adds that we know that we abide in God (the Father), and He in us, "because He has given us of HIS Spirit."

This is clearly confirmed in Romans 8:11, 14:

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through HIS Spirit [which] dwells in you... For as many as are led by the Spirit of GOD, these are the SONS of God..."

The Spirit of Christ

And still, we ALSO read that the Spirit of Christ, the SON of GOD, dwells in converted Christians.

Romans 8:9 makes this very clear: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of GOD dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of CHRIST, he is not His."

Acts 16:7 says that the Spirit of Jesus did not permit Paul and his coworkers to go into Bithynia (compare *New International Version* and *Revised Standard Version*). Philippians 1:19 speaks of the "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", and Galatians 4:6 states:

"And because you are sons, God [the Father] has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father.'"

After Christ's resurrection and glorification, both He and the Father would be able to dwell in converted Christians, through the Holy Spirit emanating or proceeding from both of them. John 14:23 says: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and WE will come to him and make OUR HOME with him." We read that the Father sends the Holy Spirit in Christ's name (John 14:26); that Christ sends the Holy Spirit (John 16:7); and that Christ sends it from the Father (John 15:26; Acts 2:33). As we have seen, the different wording can be explained in that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father AND of the Son.

It is "one" Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11,13), because the Father and

the Son are “one” (John 10:30)—they are of one mind, totally unified (compare John 17:11).

Chapter 11

HOW Did Christ Become a Human Being?

Some doubt that Christ became human at all. Others believe that He was fully God and fully man when He was here on earth. Then there are those who teach that while the “human form” of Jesus was here on earth, the “Son of God” was still in heaven. They believe that when Jesus “died,” the Son of God continued to live.

None of these concepts are correct. The Word or the *Logos*; that is, the Son of God—Jesus Christ—BECAME flesh. When He was changed into flesh, divesting Himself of His divinity and laying aside His divine attributes and glory, He ceased to exist as an immortal Spirit Being. Rather, He BECAME—was CHANGED INTO—flesh. How did this happen?

We read that Christ existed since all eternity. There was never a time when He did not exist. He was always the second Member of the God Family, which always existed as two immortal God Beings—God the Father and the Son. But Christ, who was “slain from the foundation of the world,” BECAME a human being—consisting fully of flesh—so that He could overcome sin in the flesh and DIE. When He became a man, He ceased to exist as a Spirit Being. When He died, He ceased to live—He did not continue to live, while in the grave for three days and three nights.

God the Father resurrected Him from the dead as an immortal Spirit Being, with the glory that He had before He became flesh.

God is Spirit, and so Jesus Christ, before He became a man, was Spirit because Christ was God (John 1:1). As long as Christ was a God Being, His Holy Spirit flowed from Him, as it did and does from God the Father. But in order to bestow the Holy Spirit on others, one has to be a glorified God Being. When Jesus became a human being, He did not have any longer the Holy Spirit on His own. Rather, as we have seen, it was the FATHER, who lived in Christ through HIS—the

Father's—Holy Spirit. It was the Father's Holy Spirit of power, which dwelled in Christ from His human inception without measure.

When Christ became a human being, the Father changed the immortal Spirit Being—Jesus Christ—into a mortal human being, thereby also becoming the Father of the HUMAN being Jesus Christ. Later, the Father “reversed” the process by changing the human being—Jesus Christ—back into an immortal Spirit Being.

How did the Father accomplish the change from Spirit to flesh in the Person of Jesus? Actually, this had to be an extremely unique and awesome accomplishment, so that Jesus became the ONLY-SO-begotten Son of the Father (see the discussion below to the fact that He was the only SO begotten Son of God).

First, we read that Mary was found pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the power of God the Father who impregnated Mary with Jesus. To put it bluntly, from all the biblical evidence available to us, we conclude that Jesus was changed into and became a sperm in the womb of Mary. Mary's ovum was thus fertilized, as every human baby comes into existence through the fertilization of a female egg through a male sperm. In Jesus' case, however, the sperm was not from a human father, but it was the result of a change from immortal to mortal, through the power of God the Father's Holy Spirit.

The Spirit in Man

When a human being is conceived in the womb of his or her mother, God gives that tiny little fetus a spirit—called the spirit in man. We do not know, exactly, how this is done—whether through an individual miraculous action and intervention on God's part, or whether through an automatic “mechanism” and “procedure” which is somehow attached to or incorporated in the male sperm and brought into motion at the time of conception. In any event, this human spirit did not exist before in its individual “capacity”—we read that God “forms” or “creates” it in man (Zechariah 12:1), apparently at the time of conception. That individual human spirit, which is created and comes into existence at the moment of conception, does of course not have any “memory” of anything prior to its “creation” in the human fetus.

It appears that this concept applies to Christ as well. When God the Father placed in Christ the HUMAN spirit at the time of His

conception in the womb of Mary, it did not carry with it any memory of Christ's prior life as a God Being—as the HUMAN spirit of Christ did not exist prior to Christ's change into a mortal human being.

At the same time, we read that Christ, when He was a man, clearly recalled His preexistence. We do not know exactly when Christ began to "remember," but it appears that His memory came to Him, gradually, through the indwelling Holy Spirit of God the Father.

This conclusion is based on the fact that Christ told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would remind them of the things which He had told them. In the same way, it stands to reason that the Spirit of God the Father reminded Christ of prior events in His Life as a God Being.

When a human being dies, his human spirit returns to God who gave it. It is stored in heaven to be used for the purpose of a later resurrection of the person, as it retains everything of the person, including his outward appearance, thoughts, memories, experiences and actions in his life prior to death. But the spirit in man is not a person, and neither is the Holy Spirit. Still, when a person becomes converted and is properly baptized, he will receive from God the Holy Spirit, thereby giving him divine nature, potentially leading to immortal divine life at the time of his resurrection. When that converted person dies, both his human spirit and his Holy Spirit return to God, and are retained in heaven, until the time of his resurrection to an immortal Spirit Being.

The same happened at the time of Christ's death. His human spirit, together with God the Father's Holy Spirit, returned to God, and after three days and three nights in the grave, God the Father resurrected Christ from the dead as an immortal glorified God Being, using the spirit in man and the Father's Holy Spirit to create a spiritual body (see below) with all physical and spiritual memories, thoughts and accomplishments.

But in the case of Christ, even more had to be involved.

Returning to our discussion on Christ's physical birth, recall that we said that Christ was changed from spiritual to physical. He willingly gave up His glory and laid aside His divine attributes. The question arises, what occurred at that moment to His Holy Spirit? As a God Being, He had the Holy Spirit on His own, but He did not have it on its own when He was human.

Christ's Holy Spirit

It appears that Christ's Holy Spirit stayed with God the Father in heaven—clearly NOT as a self-conscious entity, and most assuredly NOT as the Son of God—but as God retains in heaven his human spirit after a converted person's death, together with the Holy Spirit given to and residing in that person, so it appears that when Christ became a human being, the Father "retained" Christ's Holy Spirit in heaven, which Christ "laid aside."

Subsequently, when Christ died and His human spirit and the Holy Spirit of the Father (which dwelt in the human Christ without measure) returned to the Father in heaven, both the Father's Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ (retained in heaven) would have combined or "merged," and when the Father resurrected Christ from the dead, He would have done so by using Christ's human spirit, as well as the Father's Spirit which had dwelt in Christ without measure and Christ's Spirit which had been retained in heaven. But it was still the FATHER who resurrected Christ through the power of HIS Spirit.

But neither the Holy Spirit nor the spirit in man are self-conscious entities or persons. When Christ died, He was dead. There was no consciousness in Him, nor did God the Father's Holy Spirit that had dwelt in Christ continue to "live" with consciousness, while Christ was in the grave.

False Understanding

Likewise, Christ's Holy Spirit that was retained by God the Father in heaven while Jesus lived on earth did not have any self-consciousness. But based on our understanding, one can clearly see how the FALSE concept of a conscious immortal soul which keeps on living after a person dies could have entered the confused mind of man, as well as the FALSE concept that the Son of God continued to exist as a conscious Being in heaven, while the man Jesus lived on earth.

Chapter 12

The “Only-Begotten” Son

We read in John 1:17–18: “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

This passage addresses the fact that Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father and the spiritual intent of the law, and that He made forgiveness of sin possible. He is referred to as the “only begotten Son” (some translate, the only begotten God), being in the “bosom” of God the Father, thereby showing the intimate and close relationship between the two Members of the God Family.

In John 3:16, a similar statement is made:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

We can only obtain salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ—the “only begotten Son”—and as one initial step, we must believe in His Sacrifice. But His death does not save us; we will be saved by His Life (Romans 5:10), which He lives in us through the Holy Spirit.

And so, we read in 1 John 4:9:

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”

Begotten Sons and Daughters

On the other hand, converted Christians are also referred to as God’s begotten sons and daughters and His begotten children; and Christ is called the firstborn among many brethren. When we receive God’s Holy Spirit, we are begotten children of God; and when we are changed to immortal Spirit Beings at the time of Christ’s return, we become God’s born-again children. Likewise, when Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead, He became the first-BORN Son of God.

We read in John 1:12–13: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name; who were born [begotten], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

God must call us; it has nothing to do with our will to be called. And when we respond and “receive” the Truth, we can become begotten children of God at the time of our baptism, when we receive the Holy Spirit. In the passage above, the term “begotten” should be used. Please recall that the Greek word is *gennaō* and can mean “begotten” or “born,” and it can even describe the process from begetting to birth.

In Galatians 4:4–7, this development is further explained: “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons [better: sonship; see discussion below]. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

Christ never sinned. He became a Man—fully flesh—to overcome sin in the flesh and to die for us, paying the penalty for our sins. We were under the law—its penalty—and so He was placed under the penalty of the law to make our redemption possible. We can receive God’s Holy Spirit and become sons and daughters of God—first begotten children and finally born-again children. The term “adoption” is an incorrect rendering—the better translation is “sonship” (see below).

Paul elaborates in Romans 8:14–23:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption [better: sonship] by whom [which] we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together... For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God... we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit [are] eagerly waiting for the adoption

[sonship], the redemption of our body.”

As converted Christians in whom God’s Spirit dwells, we are begotten sons and daughters of God. We have already obtained sonship—we are already God’s (begotten) sons. But when we are changed into Spirit Beings, we will obtain the full sonship of immortal born-again God Beings in God’s Family, as we are told in 1 John 3:1–2.

Fundamental Difference

There is a fundamental difference between Jesus Christ, the “only” begotten Son of God, and converted Christians, who are also called begotten sons of God. Christ has always existed; there was never a time when He did not exist. Since all eternity, He was the second Member of the God Family—the Word or *Logos*, the Spokesman of God the Father, as John 1:1 explains. He was always the Son, as God was always the Father.

But when Christ became a human being as the “only begotten” of the Father (John 1:14), He became a BEGOTTEN Son of God IN THE FLESH. While we—flesh and blood human beings—become begotten children of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit in us, Christ—the immortal God Being—became FLESH and the begotten Son of God through the miracle of transformation from Spirit to flesh. He was the ONLY Personage who was EVER begotten in this way, and in that sense, He was the only SO begotten Son of God. We also read that since His conception as a human being in Mary’s womb, He had God the Father’s Holy Spirit within Him without measure.

Notice how Christ’s miraculous transformation and begettal took place.

We read in Matthew 1:18–25: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit... an angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream, saying, ‘...that which is conceived [literally: begotten] in [Mary] is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS [Savior], for He will SAVE His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

A parallel account of the announcement of the virgin birth can be found in Luke 1:26–38. Notice especially the angel’s saying in verses 31–32, 35: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

No other human being was conceived and begotten in this way, and therefore, Christ IS the only begotten Son of God in that sense. But Christ is also the firstborn among many brethren, and converted Christians are also begotten sons of God. To emphasize the distinction between Christ’s “begettal” and our “begettal,” we may refer to Christ as the only SO begotten Son of God, indicating that while others will also be called begotten sons of God, their “begettal” does not occur in the same way and does not describe the same process as Christ’s begettal did.

Chapter 13

Does God Have Feelings and Emotions?

Some have a totally wrong concept of God and view Him as an impersonal “Something” without “parts,” form and shape. That is not the God of the Bible who created man after His own image, and according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26–27)! In fact, God the Father created everything through His Son Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15–16; Hebrews 1:1–2; John 1:1–3). The Father and the Son are a Family, and the Members of the God Family are described as Personalities with feelings and emotions.

Fullness of Joy

The following sets forth descriptions of just some of God’s feelings and emotions:

We read in Psalm 16:11: “In Your presence is FULLNESS of JOY...”

Zephaniah 3:17 says: “The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One... will REJOICE over you with gladness... He will REJOICE over you with singing.”

Deuteronomy 30:9–10 adds that God will REJOICE over us “for good” IF we obey Him and keep His commandments. Compare also Isaiah 62:5 and Jeremiah 32:41.

We are told that we are to “enter into the JOY of” our God (Matthew 25:21). We are also told that if a sinner repents and finds his way back to God, “there will be... JOY in heaven” (Luke 15:7), which even includes the joy of God’s angels (verse 10).

God gives us His Holy Spirit, which emanates from Him. The fruit of the Spirit reflects what God is, and God’s Spirit is a Spirit of JOY (Galatians 5:22; compare Romans 14:17; 15:13).

At the same time, God shows His emotions towards sinners and sinful nations who refuse to repent and plan to “fight” against God, by laughing at them, or laughing them to scorn (Psalm 2:2–4; 37:12–13; 59:7–8).

God May Be Grieved

In this context, we need to realize that God is pained when we sin against Him and when we forsake Him. We read that He was “SORRY” that He had made man, and that “He was GRIEVED in His heart” over the sins which they were committing and the terrible lifestyle that they were leading (Genesis 6:6). We read in Psalm 78:40 that sinning Israel “GRIEVED Him in the desert”. Psalm 95:10 quotes God as follows: “For forty years I was GRIEVED with that generation, And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.’” We also read that we should not GRIEVE the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30); that is, we should not sin and thereby grieve God who dwells in us through His Holy Spirit.

We even read that God HATES the one who sins wickedly against Him—that is, He hates the wickedness in that person: “The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul HATES” (Psalm 11:5). God warns us not to provoke Him to ANGER through our sins (Jeremiah 25:4–7).

But even when God must punish us for our sinful and wicked conduct, He does not do it “joyfully.” Rather, we read the following about God’s punishment of Moab, in Jeremiah 48:30–33:

“‘I know his wrath,’ says the LORD, ‘But it is not right; His lies have made nothing right. Therefore I will WAIL for Moab, And I will CRY OUT for all Moab; I will MOURN for the men of Kir Heres. O vine of Sibmah! I will WEEP for you with the WEEPING of Jazer. Your plants have gone over the sea, They reach to the sea of Jazer. The plunderer has fallen on your summer fruit and on your vintage. Joy and gladness are taken From the plentiful field And from the land of Moab...’”

We must also understand that God is moved when we suffer. He feels the pain which we endure. He suffers with us. We read in Judges 10:16 that after Israel repented, God’s “soul could no longer ENDURE the misery of Israel.” Isaiah 63:9 tells us that “In all their affliction He was AFFLICTED...” He was “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:19), when He went through all of His suffering and when He died for us, thereby reconciling us with the Father. With God’s Spirit in us, all of us SUFFER when one member of the Body of Christ suffers (1 Corinthians 12:26). And so we read that when we go through suffering, God is there to give us joy: “... Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

Christ Intercedes for Us

We also read in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit “makes intercession for us with GROANINGS which cannot be uttered.” We know from other passages that it is Christ who intercedes for us (verse 34) with such groanings, through His Spirit, pleading our case before God the Father. Since He experienced suffering, trial and temptation in the flesh, He, as the second Member of the God Family and as our merciful High Priest, can aid and represent us; He knows what it is like to suffer in the flesh.

God is full of COMPASSION and has consideration for our weaknesses (Psalm 78:38–39; 86:15). We read that God PITIES His people, as a father pities his children (Psalm 103:13).

However, His pity has limits. In Ezekiel 16, God describes His love and compassion for ancient Israel when no one else pitied her. He married her and adorned her with the most precious things, so that her “fame went out among the nations because of [her] beauty, for it was perfect through [God’s] splendor which [He] had bestowed on [her]” (verse 14). But Israel became proud and trusted in her beauty (verse 15), and she paid God back with sinful and rebellious behavior, committing spiritual harlotry (verse 17). Finally, God put her away, being “agitated” (verse 43) by all her terrible actions. Reading the entire chapter, one can get a feeling as to how hurt God must have been, seeing His beautiful wife forsaking Him for other lovers.

God Is Jealous

God does not allow us to serve anyone but Him. Exodus 34:14 says: “... you shall worship no other God, for the LORD, whose name is JEALOUS, is a jealous God...” When we behave wickedly, He is jealous and furious and He avenges and will take vengeance on us (Nahum 1:2). He is slow to anger, but He will not acquit the wicked (verse 3).

If we do not repent, He—the jealous God—will not forgive us our transgressions and our sins, and if we forsake Him and serve foreign gods, He will turn and do us harm and consume us, after He has done us good (Joshua 24:19–20). Please note also Psalm 78:56–59; Deuteronomy 32:16; and 1 Corinthians 10:22.

Paul expressed the same feeling towards those who were listening to false teachers and who were in the process of departing from the

living God, saying: "I am jealous for you with GODLY JEALOUSY" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

God the Father and Jesus Christ have feelings and emotions. They are touched by what we do and experience, and we should be very thankful for this and think and behave accordingly. As God Beings, we will have emotions too.

Chapter 14

Does God Know the Future?

Does God know whether and when we will sin? Does He know how prophesied events will come to pass?

The answer depends on the circumstances.

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.

God Prophesied Future Events

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 this even possible? How could God know thousands of

years ago what would happen and what certain men would do?

God Brings It About

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.

We might also consider Isaiah 44:24–26. Sometimes, God inspires His servants to pronounce future events, and God “confirms the word of His servant and performs the counsel of His messengers” (verse 26). The *NIV* says that God “carries out” the word of His servant; and the *revised Luther Bible* writes that God “makes it true.”

God Knows Ahead of Time

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 that four angels would kill a third of man at a very clearly designated time. 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.

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. 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, both a religious leader [the false prophet] and a political leader [the beast] are clearly identified who will fight against the returning Christ, while two Christian leaders, the Two Witnesses, will prophecy 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 certain to occur.

God Decides Not to Know

On the other hand, we must realize that generally speaking, God has decided NOT to know whether human beings sin, and that is particularly true for those whom He decided “before time began” (Titus 1:1–2) to call to the Truth in this day and age. God has created man as a free moral agent, and even though God knows that we are dust, and that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21; compare Ecclesiastes 7:29), He has generally chosen NOT to know how we will act specifically in a particular situation. That is why He tests us in order to know how we will respond (Exodus 15:25; 16:4; Deuteronomy 8:2, 16).

As we have seen, there are exceptions. God knows, of course, how

the beast and the false prophet will act in the future, but we must also realize that God will not call them for salvation in this day and age. Their opportunity to repent and follow God will be given to them later, in the Great White Throne Judgment period. Also, Christ knew “from the beginning” that Judas Iscariot would betray Him (John 6:64; 13:11; 17:12; Acts 1:16)... but Judas was never called for salvation, and he will be offered repentance in the Second Resurrection.

God “Learns” from Human Conduct

However, generally speaking, God has decided not to know ahead of time, whether or not we will sin, and because of this decision, He “learns” from human conduct. That is, when He noticed how evil and wicked mankind had become prior to the Flood, His reaction of surprise and dismay is clearly revealed in Genesis 6:5–7:

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every human intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was SORRY that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth... for I am SORRY that I have made them.’”

After God had anointed Saul to be king over Israel and had given him the Holy Spirit, He decided to take the Holy Spirit away from him and to replace him as king when he rebelled against God. It is clear from the context that God did not know ahead of time—because He had CHOSEN not to know—that Saul would turn his back on God. We read that “the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35).

Also, we read later that Israel and mankind in general would act in such a horrible way that God was utterly surprised that man could reach such a depraved state of existence, saying that man’s behavior never entered His heart and His mind (Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). The *Living Bible* gives the intended meaning, as follows: “... a deed so horrible I’ve never even thought of it, let alone commanded it to be done (7:31)... something I never commanded, and cannot imagine suggesting. What an incredible evil...” (32:35).

On the other hand, when God calls us and gives us His Holy Spirit, He is totally convinced that we can make it (Philippians 1:6). He even

said about young David when He anointed him to be king, that he was a man after His own heart who would do all His Will (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). This does not mean that David would not sin, but it means that God knew and looked at his heart (1 Samuel 16:7), and He knew that David would repent of his sins, once they came to his attention. We also read that after God had studied and tested Abraham, He knew that he would teach God's Way to his children. God said: "For I know him, that he WILL command his children and his household after him, and they SHALL keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment..." (Genesis 18:19, *Authorized Version.*)

Did God Know that Adam and Eve Would Sin?

This then raises the question as to whether God knew that Adam and Eve would sin and eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The answer is that God did NOT know, as He CHOSE not to know, but He realized, of course, that Adam and Eve could sin by disobeying Him, as they had been created as free moral agents. As to the questions as to what would have happened IF they had rejected the Tree of Knowledge and had chosen instead to eat from the Tree of Life, they would not have become immortal right away. Even after eating from the Tree of Life, they still would have sinned from time to time, as we do today, since NO HUMAN BEING exists who does not sin (1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8). (There is only one exception of a sinless human being, see below.) This means that regardless of Adam and Eve's original decision in the Garden of Eden, Jesus Christ still would have had to come in the flesh to die for our sins. He was indeed predestined, from the foundation of the world, to be our Sacrificial Lamb (compare Revelation 13:8).

Did God Know that Jesus Would NOT Sin?

This brings up another question. Did God the Father and Jesus Christ KNOW, when it was decreed that the Son of God would become a man to overcome sin in the flesh, that Jesus, as a human being, would NEVER sin, so that He could become the perfect Sacrifice for us, making possible the forgiveness of our sins and our entry into the Kingdom of God?

First of all, both the Father and Jesus Christ had the absolute

conviction and complete confidence that Jesus would NOT sin. This does not negate the fact that Jesus, as a Man, having become totally flesh as we are today (John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 8:3), COULD have sinned. He had to struggle against sin so that He remained sinless throughout His human life (compare Hebrews 5:6–9; 12:3–4).

But more is involved. We read throughout the Old Testament, long BEFORE Jesus became a Man, that He, as the Messiah, would succeed in the flesh (Isaiah 52:13, so the *Luther Bible* and the *Menge Bible*; the *Revised English Bible* says: “My servant will achieve success...”) and that He would subsequently rule as a glorified God Being—with the glorified saints—on and over this earth in the Kingdom of God (compare for instance Isaiah 2:1–4; Daniel 2:44; 7:9, 13–14, 27; Zechariah 14:3–5, 9). That rule would only be possible if Jesus never sinned. Apart from the complete confidence that He would not sin, it APPEARS that God, who inspired the Old Testament prophecies, might have looked into the future... beyond Christ’s first coming, knowing that He would remain sinless, as otherwise, none of the Old Testament prophecies predicting as a certainty His rule on earth as the Messiah could come to pass.

God Has Confidence in Us

This brings us to another important question. Even though God has decided NOT to know whether and when WE will sin and also, whether we will commit the UNPARDONABLE sin, He has the utmost confidence in us that we will NOT fail Him. He knows that MOST of those whom He has foreknown, predestined, called, chosen and justified in this day and age WILL remain faithful and will make it as glorified Beings into His Kingdom (Romans 8:29–30; Revelation 17:14). He wants YOU to be successful. But then, even though King Saul had received God’s Holy Spirit, he lost it and will apparently end up in the lake of fire. And so, God warns all of us: “Hold fast what you HAVE, that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:11). The decision is ours.

Chapter 15

Does God Travel?

Many believe that God, as a supposed Trinity, can never change—meaning that when Jesus Christ died on earth, the Son of God was still alive in heaven. It is further believed that God has no form and shape, but that He is some kind of a “blob”—even though that word is being objected to, as it implies a “shape”—that He is just everywhere, without form and shape. He is in every stone, in every grain of sand, in every human, in every animal, in every angel, in Satan and every demon, in every drop of water.

That idea, of course, is accompanied by the concept that God cannot travel—that He cannot move from one place to another place—as He is everywhere at all times. As words in the Bible relate the opposite, they are just to be viewed as figurative language designed for our limited human understanding, as this would be all that we could comprehend.

We hasten to add that these concepts, in one way or another, ARE the teachings of traditional Christianity which have been adopted from pagan concepts taught and believed in by Egyptian, Babylonian and Greek “theologians” and philosophers.

To answer the question from the Bible as to whether God does travel, we need to touch upon the concepts as referred to above.

Did Jesus Resurrect Himself?

Let us begin by reviewing who raised Jesus from the dead. Was the Son of God, as part of the unalterable Trinity, still alive when Jesus was in the grave, and did He, as the Son of God, raise Himself up? (We read that Jesus was and is the Son of God, John 20:31). Or, did the unalterable “Trinity” (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) raise Jesus up?

Some use a passage in John 2:19 (where Christ said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”), to teach that Christ rose Himself up FROM THE DEAD. They claim that Christ, the Son of

God, never died, but that only His “human mantle” did. They teach that the Son of God was the second Member of an immortal and unalterable Trinity, and that He therefore could not have died. They postulate that Christ—the Son of God—raised up the human mortal Jesus. This ABOMINABLE HERESY is nowhere taught in the Bible! The Bible makes very clear that God is NOT a TRINITY; that Jesus Christ was the Son of God; and that HE DIED. It was God the Father [not the Son or the Trinity] who raised the DEAD Christ FROM THE DEAD.

For instance, Galatians 1:1 states: “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God THE FATHER, who raised HIM from the dead)...” When Christ died and was brought back to life shortly thereafter as an immortal Spirit Being, God the Father CHANGED Christ’s physical body (which had not yet decayed) into a Spirit Body. After three days and three nights in the grave, God the Father brought the DEAD Christ back to life. Christ got up, and at THAT moment, He fulfilled the prophecy that He had given to the Jews in John 2:19: He raised up His BODY.

In other words, He was lying on the ground in the tomb (John 19:40–42), but when He received immortal life from God the Father, He got up from the ground. The word for “raise up” (in Greek, *egeiro*), as used in John 2:19, is used many times to describe someone who simply STANDS UP. It is used in Mark 1:31; 9:27, and in Acts 3:7, as well as in James 5:15. In all of those cases, sick people stood up from their sick bed. God “raises or lifts” them up by giving them the power or strength to stand or to get up. John 2:18–22 does not teach that Christ raised Himself up FROM THE DEAD. Rather, it teaches that after God the Father resurrected Him from the dead, Christ raised up the temple of His BODY, by getting up.

God Has Form and Shape

God said that Moses saw the glorified “form” of the LORD (compare Numbers 12:8). God, when creating man, said that man was to be made in accordance with the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27; 9:6). God is described as having a head, arms, a body, feet, eyes and hair, among other aspects. Man is made in the physical form of God—he is a physical reflection of the Spirit Beings, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. Please also note that Christ is described as

the [Spirit] image of God the Father (2 Corinthians 4:4). He looks like God the Father; that is why He could say, even when He was here on earth in human form, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In that same way—on a physical level—man is made in the image of God.

Given the fact that God has form and shape, He IS therefore at one given moment in only one place at one specific time. As a Person, He is not everywhere at the same time, but He indeed travels, moves and changes locations. This means, when He is sitting on His throne in heaven, He is therefore not at that very same moment on earth, or on planet Mars, or in another galaxy billions of light-years away. This is why we read that God came down from heaven to walk on earth; that Jesus Christ, after His resurrection to a Spirit Being, ascended to heaven; that He was brought before God the Father in heaven to receive kingship and power; and that He will return to this earth, in power and glory, to rule all nations. Of course, we must also understand that God CAN “travel” from one place to another within a “split second.” When God is at a certain place, at that very same moment, He cannot be—as a Person—at a different place at the same time.

How Is God Everywhere at the Same Time?

It is true, of course, that God the Father and Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit emanating from both of them, can be “everywhere,” but NOT as Persons. David did not conclude that God’s miraculous omnipresence was due to God being everywhere like a form- and shapeless blob; he knew better than that.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are both Spirit Beings. They both have form and shape, composed of Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is NOT a being—rather, it is the power emanating from God (compare Micah 3:8; Luke 4:14). It is through the POWER of God’s Holy Spirit that things are created. And God’s Holy Spirit does not have form and shape—God’s Holy Spirit does not exist in a bodily form. And so God, a Spirit Being, who has form and shape, is everywhere through His Spirit. (More about this in the next chapter.)

Turning to Genesis 3:8–11, we find that God—actually in the Person of Jesus Christ, as no man has ever seen the Father (John 1:18; 6:46)—“walked” in the Garden of Eden. That must be understood

quite literally. At that moment in time, Christ appeared to Adam and Eve in a physical manifestation, but through His Spirit, He was still everywhere. [Later, we find that Christ appeared to Abraham and Sarah, together with two angels, manifesting themselves “as” humans, to eat and to speak with them about their future son and to warn Abraham of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (compare Genesis 18:1–2, 13, 16–33; 19:1).]

God Came Down from Heaven

We also read Christ’s words to Abraham in Genesis 18:20–21: “Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” Some commentaries tell us that this wording [of God coming down and seeing how bad it was] is “anthropomorphic” (applying human characteristics, traits or attributes to God) or a figurative way of speaking, allegedly “proving God’s omniscience or all-embracing knowledge.” Of course, most commentaries do not believe that God has form and shape, and that man was made, in a physical way, after the spiritual likeness of God. Nor do they believe that God travels, going from one place to another. But the Bible clearly teaches both.

A similar conclusion can be gleaned from the account about the Tower of Babel. We read in Genesis 11:5–8: “But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The LORD said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’ So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.”

This passage implies that Christ came down, apparently in response to a report by His angels, to see what was really happening at Babel, and after having analyzed the situation, both the Father and Christ determined to go down to confuse the languages (or, as some commentaries suggest, Christ spoke to angels to go down with Him. In any event, the Scripture proves that God travels.)

Taking the Bible by its word, we can see the following:

- God has spiritual form and shape. As such, He MUST travel from

one place to another place to reach His desired destination.

- The Son of God, Jesus Christ, died and was dead and in the tomb for three days and three nights, without any consciousness. He was not in heaven while He was dead in the grave on earth. The Father raised Christ from the dead. Christ (the Son of God) was dead and did not raise Himself up from the dead (He only stood up, after having been resurrected by the Father, as previously explained); and Christ left the grave and ascended to the third heaven—all of this showing that God—in the Person of the Son of God—does travel.
- God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, traveled and came down from heaven to see Abraham, and He sent two angels to Sodom to determine whether there would be ten righteous in the city.
- Christ will return to this earth with His holy angels, traveling from heaven to reach the earth (compare, for instance, Revelation 19:11–14).

All these statements show by written biblical verification that God travels—that He “moves” from one place to another place.

Let us focus in more detail on the clear teaching of the Bible in this regard:

All Untrue?

After His resurrection, Christ appeared and walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–31). It would be rather strange to conclude that Christ was at the same time in heaven, sitting next to the Father on His throne, while watching Himself from heaven, walking on earth with the two disciples.

We read in the Book of Revelation that after new heavens and a new earth have been created, the Father will come down from heaven to the new earth to dwell there (Revelation 21:3). Will He at the same time, while dwelling on the new earth, still dwell in the third heaven?

When Christ will come down to the earth to establish the Kingdom or Government of God and rule with the immortal saints on and over the earth during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, will Christ at the same time still sit on the Father’s throne in the third heaven? And since we will be immortal Members of the Family of God, will we also be part of a huge Nirvana-like blob? Is meeting

Christ in the air when He returns, and are Christ's and our ruling on the earth just illusions and hallucinations—a gigantic fraud designed for us poor human beings who could not understand the Truth? Putting the questions this way, we should see how utterly nonsensical and ridiculous the idea is that God has no form and shape, and that He does not travel.

Let us also notice this:

Christ will come back in clouds as He ascended to heaven in clouds (Acts 1:9–11). He will come down to fight for Israel (Isaiah 31:4–5). His feet will stand on that day on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), and all the saints will be with Him (verse 5). But no, learned theologians tell us, none of that happened and will happen, because God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, does not travel and He has no feet with which He could stand on the Mount of Olives.

We also read that God (Jesus Christ) came down to Mount Sinai to speak the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:20; 20:1). He later came down in the cloud and the pillar of cloud (Numbers 11:25; 12:5). We are told that the LORD rides on a swift cloud (Isaiah 19:1), and that He rides on a cherub or cherubim (Psalm 18:9–10; compare Ezekiel 1:4–28; 9:3; 10:4, 18). All of this shows, of course, that God travels, moves, walks, rides or flies, and thereby changes locations.

The Bible tells us quite succinctly that God (Jesus Christ) came down from heaven to deliver Israel out of slavery (Exodus 3:8). The Rock that went with and that followed Israel was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4).

He passed by Moses to show him His glory, which Moses could only view from the back (Exodus 33:18–23). He descended in the cloud and stood with Moses (Exodus 34:5). He talked to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11).

To even suggest that all these statements of fact—and there are many more—are not true and did not really convey what happened (as allegedly, none of that happened) makes a mockery of God and His Holy Word—the Bible. God does not look kindly on those who do this, and He most certainly will not hold them guiltless. Let us make sure that we are not fooled by the trickery, the cunning and deceitful craftiness of man (compare Ephesians 4:14), but that we continue to believe God and His infallible Word.

Chapter 16

Does God Listen to Billions of Prayers at the Same Time?

This question has perplexed many people.

A true Christian knows, based on the clear evidence of Scripture, that God can and does listen to multiple prayers at the same time.

Let us understand how this is possible.

God Knows Our Thoughts

David writes in Psalm 139:1–2: “LORD, You have searched me and known me, You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought AFAR OFF.” David knew that God could be “afar off,” and still understand all of his thoughts. Continuing in verses 3–6: “You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before. And laid your hand upon me [*i.e.*, He has given him protection and security]. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.”

Psalm 139:4 states: “For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.” Some translations render this verse in this way: “Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD” (*NIV*, compare *RSV* and *Living Bible*). [This translation reminds us of what Christ tells us in Matthew 6:8: “For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”]

1 Samuel 16:7 says that while a man may look at the outward appearance, the LORD looks at the heart. In 1 Kings 8:39 King Solomon says to God: “You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men.” Psalm 44:21 adds: “Would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.” Isaiah 66:18 quotes God as saying, “I know their works and their thoughts.” And Job says this to God in Job 42:2: “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be

withholden from thee" (*Authorized Version*).

We also find that Jesus, as a resurrected God Being, has the ability to discern and know the thoughts of people (Luke 24:38; Hebrews 4:12–13; Revelation 2:23).

Other New Testament passages also make it very clear that God the Father knows our thoughts (Luke 16:15; compare 1 Corinthians 3:20). In Acts 1:24, the disciples prayed to the Father to reveal to them who should take the place of Judas Iscariot: "You, O LORD, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen." In Acts 15:8, Peter said that God "who knows the heart," accepted Gentiles into the Church by giving them the Holy Spirit.

God will at the proper time make manifest and reveal the innermost thoughts and counsels or motives of our hearts (1 Corinthians 4:5; Luke 2:35). While our hearts might condemn us because of wrongly understood guilt complexes, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things (1 John 3:20). At the same time, we can deceive our hearts, but not God (James 1:26).

In addition, we are told that God knows the hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30). Psalms 147:4–5 informs us that God's understanding is infinite.

This Scriptural evidence shows that God DID know and hear every word which David and others spoke, and that He saw EVERYTHING that they did at the very moment in time when they did it. God is not a respecter of person—whatever God revealed about and said to David would apply to all of God's people as well; that is, God sees everything that we do today, when we do it, and He hears every word [including in our prayers] which we say, when we say it. When, let's say, hundreds of Christians speak to Him at the same time, God hears every single one of them AT THAT SAME TIME.

But how is this possible, given the fact that God, as a Person, cannot be, for example, at different places at the same time?

God's Omnipresence

We pointed out before that David did not conclude that God's miraculous omnipresence was due to God being everywhere like a form- and shapeless blob. But he explains in Psalm 139 HOW God is omnipresent and HOW God can hear multiple prayers at the same

time. Beginning with verse 7: “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?”

As we pointed out before, God the Father and Jesus Christ are both Spirit Beings, but God’s Holy Spirit does not exist in a bodily form. God’s Holy Spirit is everywhere. God, a Spirit Being, who has form and shape, is everywhere [and present] through His (form- and shapeless) Spirit.

It is true, of course, that at certain unique times, God manifested His Spirit in physical ways, such as a “dove” or “flames of fire,” but these physical manifestations do not mean, of course, that His Spirit does in fact have the (spiritual) form and shape of a dove or of fiery flames.

And so, David continues to meditate on God’s omnipresence, as follows, in verses 8–12:

“If I ascend into heaven, You are there [through the Spirit of God]; If I make my bed in hell [Hebrew *sheol*, the grave], behold, you are there [through God’s Spirit]. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there your hand shall lead me [through God’s Holy Spirit], And your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light upon me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

God’s Holy Spirit

God’s Spirit can be compared with breath or wind. God’s Holy Spirit emanates from God, and through the Holy Spirit, God is and can be everywhere at all times.

Thinking of breath, it emanates from a source, such as an animal or a human being or God. In the case of God, He is the source of His breath (or spirit). We read that God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living soul. This passage can refer to real breath, or the spirit in man through which God, through His Holy Spirit, gave life to Adam, or both. (But this does not refer to God’s Holy Spirit, as Adam and Eve never received the Holy Spirit and were barred from access to it, symbolized by the Tree of Life.)

One could also compare the Holy Spirit with electricity, emanating from a source, such as a generator or a power plant. When we touch an electricity-charged wire, we realize that there has to be a source of

the electricity. Individual electrons travel through the wire “slowly” and have to work their way through a multitude of atoms in the wire. The electricity speed is equated to the speed of light.

Another analogy would be the miracle of broadcasting. TV or radio programs are being broadcast all over the world, but each one has a source—a TV or radio station from which the broadcast goes out.

The Bible compares God’s Spirit also with living, flowing water. A stream or a river of water has a source from which it emanates, the “fountain of water.” God is that source. Revelation 21:6 says: “And He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of water of life freely to him who thirsts.’”

In John 4:10, 14, God’s Spirit is compared with water. Jesus tells the woman at the well: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water... whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The Bible makes it very clear that Christ compared the Holy Spirit with living water to be poured out. We read in John 7:37–39, in the *Authorized Version*: “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirsts, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive...)”

Christ compares the Holy Spirit with living WATER. God pours out of His Holy Spirit [in Acts 2:17]—again the same analogy of water being poured out on or into people is being used.

This is referring to the fountain of water, God, who is willing to give us of His Spirit. Please note Isaiah 58:10–12, addressing the future of those who did receive God’s Holy Spirit prior to Christ’s Second Coming: “You shall be like a spring of water whose waters do not fail” (or: “never run dry,” *New Jerusalem Bible*).

We need to realize that God lives in converted Christians through His Holy Spirit. This is HOW God can dwell in thousands of Christians all at the same time (John 14:23)—through His Spirit (compare Romans 8:9–11, 14–15; Galatians 4:6). And when He dwells in thousands of

Christians through His Spirit, He can also see, acknowledge, hear and read the minds of those Christians through His Spirit—all at the same time. Even though Christ appeared to Adam and Eve or Abraham or Moses at a particular moment in time, in a physical manifestation, through His Spirit, He was still everywhere at that same time.

God Does Not Listen Today to Billions of Prayers

But we should also consider that even though He could, God does not listen to billions of prayers at the same time.

The astounding Truth of the Bible is that generally, He does not hear, nor does He answer the prayers of just anyone. In fact, at this time and throughout human history, only a small proportion of people have had the kind of relationship with God in which their prayers would be heard by Him! God hears the prayers of those who have access to Him through Jesus Christ! Jesus taught that not everyone praying was being heard by God! However, for those who have been called and who have established a relationship with God, prayer is the vital communication with God to obtain His guidance—His oversight in our lives!

The New Testament emphatically teaches that Satan is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). The whole world has been deceived by him (Revelation 12:9), and those who are deceived may be even praying to Satan, without knowing it—not to God the Father! Jesus Christ is not serving as their High Priest, nor does God generally hear their prayers.

God is not now trying to save this world! Rather, He has called some to be a kind of “firstfruits” of His salvation (compare James 1:18)—identified as His “elect” (compare Matthew 24:22, 24, 31). God hears the prayers of His “saints” (compare Revelation 8:3) because of what Jesus Christ accomplished in becoming our Savior.

The elect have been chosen for salvation at this time, and they have the opportunity for God to hear their prayers. They are those who seek God with a true humility to be obedient to Him. They have gained access to God.

Consider, also, that God is willing to respond to those who truly turn to Him: “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). Sadly,

this does not describe the people of our age—not even the countless millions who profess to be followers of Christ!

This reduces the number of people who pray to God at the same time and are heard by Him quite drastically to perhaps a few thousand ... in any event much less than a million, not to speak of 7.8 billion.

God Does Not Hear “Sinners”

In John 9, Christ healed a man on the Sabbath who had been born blind. The Pharisees and the Jews accused Christ of breaking the Sabbath and concluded that He was not from God (verse 16) and a “sinner” (verse 24, in Greek, *hamartolos*). In response, the healed man said: “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing” (verses 31, 33).

The Pharisees had made terrible accusations against Jesus. They had accused Him of casting out demons with the help of Beelzebub, the “ruler of the demons”—another designation for Satan (Matthew 12:24). Some even claimed that He was possessed by Satan (Mark 3:22). Christ warned them in that context that they were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin, which cannot be forgiven, for they were blaspheming God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in Christ (Matthew 12:31–32; Mark 3:28–30). The implication is that Jesus, when He was called a “sinner,” was accused of being a “pervert” and a “bastard,” born of fornication (John 8:41), influenced and possessed by Satan the devil and his demons (John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20). The man who was healed of his blindness responded that Jesus could not have been guilty of such accusations, because if He was such a “sinner,” God would not have heard Him and used Him to heal his eyes.

The Bible does not teach that God does not hear us when we slip and fall occasionally, committing a sin because of weakness or neglect. All of us sin occasionally (1 John 1:8). We are told that if we sin, we can repent of and confess our sin to God, and ask God for forgiveness, and “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This shows that God WILL HEAR us when we pray to Him, even though we have sinned.

However, Isaiah 59:2–3 tells us that God does not hear us when we live in iniquity and when we are unwilling to repent of it. God

says in Isaiah 1:15: “Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.”

God clearly states in Micah 3:4: “Then they will cry to the LORD, But He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, Because they have been evil in their deeds.” David understood that if he “had cherished iniquity in [his] heart, the Lord would not have listened” to his prayers (Psalm 66:18, *Revised Standard Version*).

God told Jeremiah that He would not hear those who rebelled against God and who continued to live in rebellion (Jeremiah 14:11–12). God will NOT LISTEN to prayers of people who REFUSE to hear His law (Zechariah 7:11–13).

If we continue to openly rebel against God; refuse to listen to Him and His Word; refuse to repent of our sins; refuse to keep His Law and to be obedient to Him; then God will not listen to our prayers. If we want to remain “sinners,” even though we have been taught the Truth—if we choose to continue to follow the dictates and devices of our own evil heart—then we cannot expect to be heard on high.

God May Listen to Unconverted People

This reduces the number of people even more whom God is hearing and listening to at the same time. Even when a person is called to salvation and responds to the call, he or she will not be heard if they depart from the Truth. On the other hand, God may hear the prayers of people who show genuine remorse for their deeds, even though they might not be called to salvation in this day and age. God listened to the prayer of the Ninevites and spared their city (Jonah 3:5–10). Jesus confirmed later that their “repentance” was sufficient for God to relent from the disaster that He had intended to bring upon them (Matthew 12:41).

Christ listened to the prayer of a Gentile woman and healed her young daughter, by casting out a demon, when He saw her faith (Mark 7:25–30). In that case, we don’t even know whether she was conscious of, and whether she had repented of her sins, but God honored her faith in Him. God says that until He calls someone to repentance, He overlooks the time of ignorance (Acts 17:30), but even then, He desires that people “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” (Acts 17:27).

Someone who is looking to God and who is trying to do what is right, as much as he or she understands it, might very well be heard by God. Christ healed many people who had faith in Him, even though they did not understand many things about God and His Way of Life. But once God calls us to salvation, He expects of us to respond to His call, repent, get to know Him and His Way better, and to obey Him. We have to forsake the ways of this world and choose to live God's Way of Life.

Children of Converted Parents

This would especially include those children who are growing up in the Truth with at least one converted parent. Little children are basically unaware of what sin is. But they may have a humble and teachable heart. When they pray to God, He might answer their prayers. Let us realize what Christ said about little children, in Matthew 18:3-4: "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Little children don't have an agenda. They are quick to forgive. They are open to teaching. Many times, God may respond to their prayers, if they "believe" in God in their limited way, since Christians must become "like" them to be able to enter God's Kingdom.

Still, as we can see from the foregoing, the number of prayers which God would hear and listen to at the same time is considerably less than millions or even billions of prayers. If we want God to answer our prayers and grant us the petitions of our hearts, we need to obey Him. After all, there is a strong connection between obedience and answered prayers, as we read in 1 John 3:22: "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

It is true, of course, that God watches all of mankind to see whether someone seeks Him (Psalm 11:4; 14:2-3). But He knows that in general, the overwhelming majority do not seek Him in this day and age, and so He does not listen to their prayers either, which for the most part are not even directed towards Him anyway.

There are many Scriptures which, according to some, seem to

suggest otherwise; that is, that God hears the prayers of everybody at the same time, as He allegedly searches the hearts of everybody every second. But this is not what the Bible teaches. We saw before that God searched David's heart and that He knows and tests the hearts of man. But this does not necessarily mean that God does so every second of each person's consciousness. It is most certainly true for those whom God has called for salvation and to whom He has given His Holy Spirit, or with whom His Spirit works, leading them to conversion (Acts 15:8; Romans 8:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 2:23).

But as mentioned, this only applies to a very few today. The Bible does not mean to tell us that God needs to listen to the prayers of billions of people at the same time to determine their thoughts and hearts. After all, they are not judged today; their judgment will still come at a later time. Nobody can come to Christ unless the Father draws him (John 6:65; 6:44). God knows that all others are under the rule of Satan and that they, generally speaking, are fulfilling the will of their father, the Devil (John 8:44).

Even though God is most certainly capable of listening to billions of people at the very same time, the Bible does not teach us that He does; nor, that He has to do this.

God Not Just One Being

It may be easier for man's mind to grasp the fact that God can and does listen to multiple prayers at the same time, and that He acts on them at the same time, when we realize that God is not just one Being, but a Family, consisting of two God Beings—the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son. We are told that when we pray to the Father, we may and should do this "in the name of Christ" (compare John 14:13; 16:23–24, 26). This concept needs to be understood in its full magnitude and application.

When we do something in the name of Christ, we recognize His great power through which He works. Acts 3:6 says that Peter healed a lame person by telling him to rise up and walk "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Acts 3:16 says that Christ's Name, "through faith in His Name," has healed a person—the faith which comes through Him did it. Acts 4:7 quotes the high priest asking Peter, "By what power [*dunamis* in Greek; a reference to the power of God's Spirit] or by what

name have you” healed this man? Acts 4:10 quotes Peter’s answer: I did it “...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth..., by Him this man stands here before you whole.”

John 14:13–14 says that whatever we ask in Christ’s name, Christ will do it. The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, explains: “...whatever you ask in My name—as Mediator—that I will do.” When the Father gives us the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name, He is actually giving us the Spirit through Christ. The Father gives it to Christ, and Christ passes it on to us.

When we pray to the Father in Christ’s name, we expect Christ to do something while we pray. The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, explains that Christ is the living Conductor of the prayer upward, and the answer downward. When we pray to the Father in the name of Christ, we are, in a sense, asking Christ to plead our case to the Father.

Christ lives in us, and when we pray in the name of Christ, it is actually Christ who gives us the mind to say the right things, and it is He who even communicates to the Father what we might have wanted to say—but we could not find the right way to express them. We read that the Spirit makes intercession for us, when we pray (compare Romans 8:26–27). Verse 34 clarifies that it is actually Christ, through His Spirit, who makes intercession for us or pleads our cause. He is a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45).

So, there is communication going on between the Father and Christ. Both are involved when it comes to listening to and answering the prayers of God’s people. This concept might help us to also understand better what will occur when billions of people will be resurrected in the Great White Throne Judgment who will all be praying to God at the same time. Then, the God Family will consist of millions of Beings who will all be God—all being able and willing to hear and respond to those who pray. Of course, we will always be under the authority of the Father and the Son, and we will never take their place and act in a way which would not be in harmony with the Father’s and the Son’s Will. But as we read that we will be teachers, guiding people and preventing them from going the wrong way (compare Isaiah 30:20–21), we would also listen to them when they pray.

The Function of Angels

But there is still another aspect pertaining to the concept of hearing and answering prayers; that is, we must not overlook the function of angels.

Man has no comprehension of how many angels exist. The revealed number is indeed mind-boggling. In Revelation 5:11, the number of angels that had assembled before the throne of God is given as "... ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." Hebrews 12:22 goes even further: "But you have come to... an innumerable company of angels." The Greek word for "innumerable" is *anarithmethos*, literally meaning, "unnumbered" or "without number." Certainly, God knows how many angels He created but for man, angels are "without number."

What, if anything, do angels have to do with human prayers?

Two interesting Scriptures show a connection. They are found in Revelation 5:8 and in Revelation 8:3-5:

"Now when He [the Lamb, Jesus Christ] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders [all angelic beings] fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints..."

"Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake."

It is clear that these passages do not permit us to pray to angels. The worship of angels is specifically prohibited in Scripture. It is also debated as to what exactly the passages mean. Many commentaries say that Revelation 8:3 should be rendered, "... that he should offer it to the prayers of all the saints..." One author writes: "The incense was to be mingled with the prayers of the saints. The incense was added to give a fragrance to the prayers of the saints, and render them acceptable before God." Another commentary states, "The prayers are to be incensed, so as to (typically) render them pure and acceptable to God."

On the other hand, Revelation 5:8 identifies the prayers with incense.

But whatever the exact meaning, it is obvious that some connection exists between the prayers of God's people and angelic activity, including the answer to those prayers, which was effectuated by the angel by throwing the censer to the earth, causing "natural" catastrophes.

This angelic activity becomes more obvious when considering the following facts:

We read in Genesis 18:20–21 that God said: "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." It appears that God was told by some of His angels how sinful the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were. But we also read that righteous Lot was plagued from day to day by the wickedness of the people (2 Peter 2:7–8). So he, too, would have prayed to God about them. As a consequence, God wanted to test those people to see how evil they were, and He sent two angels to them for that purpose. Angels had some responsibility and function pertaining to man's prayer.

In Daniel 10:12–13, 20–21; 11:1, a mind-boggling and awesome fight in the Spirit world is revealed. A mighty angel—perhaps Gabriel who had appeared to Daniel twice before—was sent to the prophet with a message. The angel told Daniel: "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia [a powerful demon ruling over Persia] withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings [demons] of Persia... And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece [another powerful demon ruling over Greece] will come... No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince. Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him."

The demon of Persia fought with the angel of God—most likely Gabriel—for twenty-one days, trying to prevent him from reaching Daniel with his message which God had given him to deliver to Daniel. In other words, God sent the angel to Daniel to bring him the answer to his prayer. The archangel Michael had to help Gabriel by fighting

in his stead with the demon of Persia, so that Gabriel could appear to Daniel in a vision.

Guardian Angels

The Bible also speaks of guardian angels whom God has specifically assigned for His people's protection. In Genesis 48:15–16, Jacob acknowledged the presence of his guardian angel throughout his life. We read in the *Revised English Bible*, "The god in whose presence my forefathers lived, my forefathers Abraham and Isaac, the god who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who rescued me from all misfortune, may he bless these boys." Jacob was convinced that God had been with him all of his life, and He was specifically present through a particular angel whom He had assigned to watch over Jacob.

Acts 12:15 shows that the disciples thought that Peter's angel had appeared, as they believed Peter to be in prison. They specifically said, "It is his angel." In other words, they thought it was the particular angel whom God had assigned to watch over Peter.

Jesus Christ confirmed the existence of guardian angels in Matthew 18:10, when He talked about little children who believe in Him, as well as true Christians who must become "as" little children: "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." The obvious implication is that in all these cases, they are somehow involved with the prayers of the people whom they are assigned to protect.

Just prior to His arrest, Christ prayed to God the Father, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:42–44). In answer to Christ's prayer, God sent one of His angels to give Jesus Christ encouragement. We don't know what exactly the angel did, but we are told that he "strengthened" Christ. In addition, the Bible does not limit God's protection for His people to just one angel. Christ told Peter that He could ask the Father to send Him more than twelve legions or more than 6,000 angels for His protection (Matthew 26:53).

Angels Watch Over Us

In Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel about a dream. The king had seen “a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven” (verse 13). This “watcher” had proclaimed “a decision” that had been made “by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men” (verse 17). Daniel interpreted the dream to the king, explaining to him that because of his pride, he would have to live for seven years with the animals. He stated in verse 23, “. . . the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. This is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king.”

These watchers were holy angels of God. One of them spoke to the king in his dream, as Daniel recognized and confirmed. The interesting revelation is that these watchers or angels were involved in God’s decision-making process in heaven regarding Nebuchadnezzar. We are told about another similar episode in 1 Kings 22:19–23, where God was talking to His angels as to how to bring about a certain outcome: “Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, “Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?” So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit [perhaps a demon] came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, “I will persuade him.” The LORD said to him, “In what way?” So he said, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And the LORD said, “You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.” Therefore look! The LORD has put [allowed] a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”

God’s angels watch on the good and the bad, and they report their findings to God. In Revelation 5:6, we read about the Lamb Jesus Christ, “having seven eyes, which are the seven [s]pirits of God sent out into all the earth.” These “seven spirits” are seven angelic beings. To capitalize “spirits,” as the *New King James Bible* does, is clearly wrong and misleading. These seven angelic beings are also mentioned in Zechariah 3:9; 4:10: “Upon the stone are seven eyes. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole

earth." Some of God's angels are referred to as "eyes of the LORD" or as "watchers"—keeping watch on man. Proverbs 15:3 reads, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping WATCH on the evil and the good." 2 Chronicles 16:9 adds, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

Some of these seven angelic beings are described in Zechariah 6:1–7: "Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?' And the angel answered and said to me, 'These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the LORD of all the earth. The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.' Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, 'Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.' So they walked to and fro throughout the earth."

An additional account can be found in Zechariah 1:8–11: "I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were horses: red, sorrel, and white. Then I said, 'My lord, what are these?' So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, 'These are the ones whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.' So they answered the [a]ngel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.'"

God's angels are watching and observing us. They are giving reports and expressing their feelings to God—participating thereby in God's decisions and decrees. Angels rejoice when a sinner repents (Luke 15:10).

Angels Are Assigned to Help Us

There exists a very special relationship between angels and man.

The Bible shows us that they are assigned by God to help those whom God is calling to salvation. Hebrews 1:14 says about angels: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” Psalm 34:7 adds: “The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him [that is, “who will inherit salvation”], And delivers them.” God sends forth His angels to “minister,” that is, to serve and help man achieve his potential to inherit salvation—eternal life in the Family of God. Angels are, in fact, intimately involved with our salvation. They are not robots, mechanically obeying God’s Word. They joyfully and eagerly fulfill their task to minister to those who will inherit salvation.

This includes watching and observing us, listening to our words and prayers, reporting to God what they have noticed, and somehow participating in delivering our prayers as incense to God. This does not diminish the role of Jesus Christ, who is our only Mediator, but somehow angels are involved in “presenting” the incense of our prayers. And they are most certainly involved in the practical aspect of carrying out God’s answers to our prayers—while we emphasize again that it is Christ who receives the answers from the Father. This amazing “interactive-relationship” is explained in Revelation 1:1, where we read: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show His servants—things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.” Compare also Revelation 22:6.

So, it is not a problem for the God Family to listen to and answer many prayers at the same time. We should never think that God is too busy to hear us. Rather, we might sometimes think that we are too busy to pray to Him. But without Him and His help, where would we be? And more importantly, what would we be? We would most certainly not be, what we are today or what we can become when we are properly baptized: A Spirit-begotten child of His, in whom the Father’s and the Son’s Holy Spirit dwells.

Chapter 17

WHO Does Answer our Prayers?

John 16:26–27 states the following:

“In that day you will ask in My name, and I DO NOT SAY TO YOU THAT I SHALL PRAY THE FATHER FOR YOU; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God...”

We said earlier that Christ tells us that we are to pray to the Father in “Christ’s name” (compare, for instance, John 16:23: “... whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you”) and that John 14:13–14 says that whatever we ask in Christ’s name, Christ will do it. We also read that Christ is our Mediator, appearing before the Father on our behalf and pleading our case.

So, does John 16:26–27 say that Christ will NOT pray for us to the Father? Hardly, as then, we would have a glaring contradiction.

The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, explains: “Christ does pray the Father for His people, but not for the purpose of inclining an unwilling ear... It is not that the Father were not of Himself disposed to aid you.”

Christ was saying, in effect: It is not that the Father does not love you. He does love you, because you have loved Me. At the same time, Christ IS our Mediator, and it is His role, as the One who HAD BEEN MAN, and can therefore sympathize with our weaknesses, to speak to the Father on our behalf. Christ lives in us (2 Corinthians 13:5). Christ lived in Paul, and Paul lived by the faith of Christ (Galatians 2:20, *Authorized Version*), even when he spoke to people and when he prayed to God. Notice 2 Corinthians 13:3: “... since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me.” As Christ lived in Paul, He was speaking through and for Paul.

When we pray to the Father in the name of Christ, we ask Christ to communicate our prayers, in their intended way, to the Father.

Hebrews 9:24 tells us that Christ appears in the presence of God the Father for us, NOW, every time we pray in His name.

This conclusion has been questioned by some. In pointing at John 16:26–27, it was stated that Christ only intercedes for us when we have sinned and pray to God for forgiveness; or, that Christ does not intercede for us at all in an active way; but when we use the words “in Christ’s name,” it is alleged that God the Father only remembers thereby Christ’s Supreme Sacrifice, and that is all which is necessary, without any active role of Christ and without any literal intervention or intercession.

These concepts are erroneous. Christ’s role in interceding for us is VERY active, direct and immediate.

God’s Love for Us

Let us review some more statements from commentaries, trying to explain the meaning of John 16:26–27.

The *Expositor’s Greek Testament* states:

“The intention of the statement is to convey fuller assurance that their prayers will be answered. The Father’s love needs no prompting. Yet the intercession of Christ, so emphatically presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in Romans 8:34, is not ignored. Jesus says: ‘I do not base the expectation of answer solely on my intercession, but on the Father’s love... I do not bring this forward as the sole reason why you may expect to be heard’...”

Similarly, *Calvin’s Commentary on the Bible*:

“John calls [Christ] our Advocate (1 John 2:1). Paul also testifies that Christ now intercedes for us (Romans 8:34); and the same thing is confirmed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who declares that Christ always liveth to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25)... Christ does not absolutely say, in this passage, that he will not be Intercessor, but he only means, that the Father will be so favorably disposed towards the disciples, that, without any difficulty, he will give freely whatever they shall ask...”

A very insightful comment can also be found in *Coffman’s Commentaries on the Bible*:

“This is a further exhortation for the apostles to pray directly to God in Jesus’ name, on the grounds that the love of God for Christ

is extended to Jesus' disciples. This love of God was the result not merely of their belief in Christ... but was also based upon their love of Christ... because... such love means keeping Jesus' words and obeying his commands (John 14:15)."

The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* elaborates:

"In the future, prayer would indeed be in the name of Christ, but not in the sense that the Son would be the means of overcoming some sort of hesitancy or resistance in the Father which otherwise believers would encounter. On the contrary, the Father loveth them, and is ready to receive them because of their attitude toward his beloved Son."

The *Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New Testament* state:

"When Christ says, I do not say that I will pray the Father for you, the meaning is not that he will lay aside his office as intercessor for believers, but that they had not only his intercession, but the Father's love, upon which to ground their hope of audience... the Christian's prayers, put up in Christ's name, cannot fail of audience and acceptance for the sake of the Mediator's intercession and the Father's love... in our prayers we ought so to eye and look up to Christ's intercession, as not to overlook and forget the Father's love, but ground our hopes of audience upon both."

We can see from the Bible, as the above-quoted commentators also recognize, that Christ continues to intercede for us quite actively, and when we pray to the Father in Christ's name, we emphasize the fact that we are aware of Christ's very personal and individual intercession on our behalf. At the same time, we must also realize the great love that the Father has for us, so that the Father's and Christ's love for us, who are "one" in mind and purpose (John 10:30), will guarantee that our prayers will be heard, when we do our part (1 John 3:22), and that we will receive what we ask in accordance with God's Will (1 John 5:14).

Only One Mediator

The Catholic concept is preposterous that people must pray to the "Virgin Mary" who, as Christ's mother, has allegedly more love for us than the Father. Equally preposterous is the idea that when praying to the "Virgin Mary," she will intercede for us in speaking to Christ; and He will listen to His mother and then intercede for us in pleading with

the Father who is portrayed as the cruel and harsh Old Testament God.

First of all, there is only ONE Mediator between God and Man—Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). He is the ONLY one who was resurrected to eternal life; those who died in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life at the time of His Second coming... not before then (1 Corinthians 15:20–23). The “Virgin Mary” is no intercessor... she is not in heaven, nor even alive; she is dead in her grave, waiting for the resurrection from the dead.

In addition, the false idea that the Father is the harsh God of the Old Testament, while Christ is the loving God of the New Testament, is also quite blasphemous, because as we have seen, it was Jesus Christ who, as the God of the Old Testament, dealt and acted directly with the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:4)—but He was by no means harsh and cruel; as the second Member of the God Family, He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Therefore, Christ emphasizes in John 16:26–28 that the Father, as God, IS love (1 John 4:8), and that He loves us (1 John 4:9–10). His intercession is not for the purpose of awakening or stirring up God’s love; it is however, at times, for the purpose of re-emphasizing the fact that we are flesh and blood human beings who are weak and feeble; and that Jesus lived as a Man and experienced how it is to be tempted in the flesh in all things, while overcoming sin in the flesh and staying sinless (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 4:15).

It is also for this very reason that Jesus is the Judge of all men, because He is the Son of MAN (John 5:22, 27)...having lived as a human being (John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:5–8) and experienced the weakness of the flesh (Matthew 27:41). We read that God loves the Son, and because of His Son, He also loves us with the SAME love (John 17:23), if we are willing to manifest His love (1 John 5:2–3), which “has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit [which] was given to us” (Romans 5:5).

Chapter 18

Who Will Resurrect the Dead?

The Resurrection of the dead is one of the basic and fundamental doctrines (Hebrews 6:1–2). The Bible teaches that there is more than just one resurrection. For instance, Revelation 20:5 speaks of the FIRST Resurrection, necessitating at least a second resurrection. In fact, there will be three resurrections.

The First Resurrection will occur when Christ returns, and those who have died in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life. The Second Resurrection or the Great White Throne Judgment is a resurrection to physical life and includes those who have died without ever having been granted the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. They will be given that opportunity then, and, at the end of their judgment period, they will be given eternal life if they have qualified. The Third Resurrection is to physical life as well, but it is composed of those who have committed the unpardonable sin before they died. They will be thrown into the lake of fire to be burned up.

Who, exactly, will resurrect those who have died? Who will bring them back to life?

The short answer is that God will do it. There is no biblical evidence that angels, let alone Satan and his demons, would have the power to resurrect the dead.

But since God is a Family, consisting of the Father and the Son, who within the God Family will bring about the resurrection?

We read and know from the Bible that it was the Father who raised *Christ* from the dead.

To reiterate, let us again note Galatians 1:1, which says:

“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)...”

Note that it was the Father, not the Son or the “Person” of the Holy Spirit, who resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead. Nor did

the dead Jesus resurrect Himself. The teaching that God is a Trinity, consisting of three Persons, is false. The teaching that the Son of God, as being part of the unalterable Trinity, stayed alive in heaven when Jesus died, is equally false and constitutes parts of the teaching of the spirit of antichrist. The idea that the Son of God resurrected Jesus is blasphemous, because Jesus WAS and IS the Son of God (compare 1 John 4:15). When Jesus died, the Son of God died. And it was the Father who resurrected the Son of God—Jesus Christ—from the dead.

As God the Father raised up Christ, so *He will raise us up as well.*

God the FATHER Will Resurrect Us

1 Corinthians 6:14 states very clearly: “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power”—the power of His Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:11 adds: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [which] dwells in you.”

2 Corinthians 1:2,9 says: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ... Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.” Paul speaks in this passage of God the Father who raises the dead.

2 Corinthians 4:14 adds to this: “... knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.”

Some commentaries have considerable difficulty with this last passage, since it says that “He”—the Father—will raise us up “with” Jesus. Due to the fact that most teach the Trinity, they have a problem with saying that the above-quoted Scripture states that the Father and the Son will raise up the dead, since the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. They therefore conclude that this passage does not even talk about the coming resurrection of the dead, but that it describes here a figurate resurrection to a new life and the community which we have with Christ today. However, 2 Corinthians 4:14 speaks of our future (He “will also raise us up”)—not our present condition.

Some say that 2 Corinthians 4:14 should be translated in this way: “... Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up

also by Jesus..." (*Authorized Version*). The German *Schlachterbibel* and the *Lutherbibel* of 1891 and of 1964, and the *Neue Lutherbibel* 2009, all say that God the Father will raise us up "through Jesus."

Will Jesus Christ Resurrect Us?

Before addressing this alternate translation, let us explore as to whether there is any biblical evidence that Jesus will resurrect us.

John 6:39–40, 44, 54 quotes Jesus as follows:

"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day... Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

According to this passage, it is the Father's Will that Christ should raise up or resurrect man... beginning with the first resurrection. Christ clearly said repeatedly in the above-quoted passage that HE will raise up those who died.

John 11:23–25 adds to this, when addressing the death of Lazarus and his sister Martha's reaction: "Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.'"

In Complete Harmony

Jesus is addressing here those who will be resurrected to eternal life. But Jesus' words must not be misunderstood by concluding that it is He, alone, who will resurrect us. This would contradict the passages, quoted above, which show us that the Father is involved in the resurrection of man. Rather, the Truth is that the Father and Christ will act in complete harmony. Their Will to resurrect man, and whom at what time, is totally identical. In that sense, the Father and the Son are "one" (John 10:30; 17:11, 20). They are of a completely identical mindset (compare John 5:19).

John 5:21 tells us: "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life

to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”

To understand all of these quoted Scriptures correctly, we conclude that Christ will be the Person within the God Family who will actually raise man from the dead, but He will be doing it in complete harmony and agreement with the Father.

In fact, it will still be the Father, as the highest in the God Family (John 10:29), who will *resurrect* us through Jesus Christ.

We recall that it was the Father who *created* everything through Jesus Christ (Revelation 4:11; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24–31; Hebrews 1:1–2; 2:10; John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:15–16; Ephesians 3:9).

Addressing the resurrection, John 5:25, 28–29 says:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live... Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [better: judgment].”

Gill’s Exposition of the Bible explains this passage in this way: “It will be the voice of the Son of God that will quicken and raise the dead.”

Through and With Jesus

The Father is greater than Christ (John 14:28). Whatever Christ does is in submission to God the Father. (Compare also in this context 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, which says that at the end, Jesus will deliver the kingdom—the government and rule as well as all the born-again Sons and Daughters, including Himself—to God the Father). Christ would never act in any way contrary to the Father’s Will. And so, when He resurrects someone to eternal life, it is in accordance with the Father’s Will as well. It is still the Father who directs and does it, but He does it through or by Jesus Christ.

As the Father *created* man through Jesus, He will also *resurrect* man through Jesus.

Returning to 2 Corinthians 4:14 and the question as to whether the Father will resurrect us “with” or “by” or “through” Jesus, let us note some concepts as brought forth by several commentaries:

The *Jamieson Fausset and Brown Commentary* says: “... shall raise up us also—at the resurrection (1Co 6:13, 14) by Jesus—The oldest

manuscripts have 'with Jesus.'"

The *Pulpit Commentary* agrees, stating: "By Jesus—The reading supported by nearly all the best manuscripts is 'with Jesus.'"

Even translating it in this way ("with Jesus") would not negate Christ's role or the Father's role in the resurrection. Rather, the thought would be expressed that God the Father, together with Jesus, will resurrect us.

Barnes Notes on the Bible explains this passage as follows: "By Jesus—By the power or the agency of Jesus. Christ will raise up the dead from their graves, John 5:25–29."

We would agree with these conclusions, as it is indeed the Father who will resurrect man through Jesus Christ, as it was the Father who made man through Jesus Christ.

Chapter 19

What Will We Be in the First Resurrection?

The Bible teaches that those who die and have qualified as “first-fruits” will be raised in the First Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20–26; Revelation 20:4–6). Many false concepts exist as to the nature of the First Resurrection. The Bible teaches that the First Resurrection is a resurrection to eternal, immortal life—to an existence in the Spirit realm, when converted men and women become born-again Members in and of the Kingdom and Family of God.

We are told that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50), and that in the First Resurrection, we will have incorruptible spiritual bodies, when we are “raised in glory” (verses 42–44). We will explain in the next chapter what is meant by “spiritual” bodies.

Jesus Christ was the very first who was raised in the first resurrection (Acts 26:23)—being the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). His followers will be resurrected in the same way as He was, at the time of His return (1 Thessalonians 4:14–17).

Horrible Misconceptions

The Christian world is filled with horrible misconceptions about the First Resurrection. In a Christian book pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the following description of the RESURRECTED Christ was given:

“[Mary Magdalene] backed out of the tomb... and found her way partially barred by a terribly disfigured man whom she supposed had to be the keeper of the garden... There was something about that one eye—the other seemed to be almost closed with terrible bruises and livid wounds, the lips torn and blue, and the skin pallid. It was Jesus!”

These descriptions totally negate the fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected as a glorified Spirit Being who did not and does not have

a physical body. The Bible does not support the concept that He was resurrected as a physical being who was glorified later when He ascended to heaven. Rather, we read in 1 Corinthians 15:42–44:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

When Christ was resurrected, after having been dead and buried in the grave for three days and three nights, He was raised AS a glorified Spirit Being. He was not resurrected as a physical human being and then subsequently glorified. Rather, at the exact time and the very moment of His resurrection, His physical body, which had not seen decay or corruption, was changed into a spiritual body. Christ was resurrected in glory. He ascended to heaven in glory. We read in 1 Timothy 3:16, that Christ was received up in glory, with a glorified spiritual body. As a Spirit Being, He does not have a disfigured body.

We understand, of course, that the glorified Jesus MANIFESTED Himself as a human being after His resurrection, but NOT in the way as described in the above-quoted book. He did not manifest Himself to Mary in a disfigured state. It is true that He later appeared to the apostles and “doubting Thomas” with wounds in His hands and at His side to convince them that it was He (John 20:24–29; Luke 24:39–40), but there is not the slightest hint that He did so on other occasions. And it is of course absurd to think that He, as a Spirit Being, still carries with Him in His spiritual body the physical wounds inflicted upon Him when He was a human being.

The confusion regarding the nature of the First Resurrection is even magnified by statements in other commentaries, such as the “*Compact Bible Commentary*” of the “*Nelson’s Compact Series*,” which states the following regarding 1 Thessalonians 4:16:

“Clearly the [first] Resurrection will be a PHYSICAL resurrection in which BODILY existence will be restored... The resurrected bodies of Christians will be like that of Christ... incorruptible and immortal, and yet they will be bodies of FLESH and BONE...”

This statement is terribly wrong and quite frankly, blasphemous,

but many Christians believe in it, as they do not understand the clear teaching of the Bible.

As mentioned, the First Resurrection is NOT a physical resurrection, and the resurrected bodies of Christians will NOT be bodies of FLESH and BONE. This very concept is preposterous. Instead, we read that they are resurrected with an immortal SPIRITUAL body. God will raise them up to spiritual, immortal and eternal life. God will not first resurrect their dead "physical bodies" and then "change" them into spiritual bodies. Rather, God will resurrect or raise the Christians with spiritual bodies.

When God the Father resurrected Jesus Christ, He changed His physical body (which was still in the grave) into a spiritual body. That is why Christ could later walk through closed doors, and why He could make Himself visible and invisible, as He pleased. We should also note that Christ, when He again became a Spirit Being, which is invisible to the human eye, could manifest Himself as a human being, even so much so that He appeared to have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39–40). Of course, as a Spirit Being, He did not really have flesh and bone, but He was able to manifest Himself in such a way. Jesus did speak of "a spirit" not having flesh and bones as He did (verse 39). However, He was speaking of demonic spirits not being able to manifest themselves in the flesh. We have the example of Christ and two angels appearing as men and eating a meal in the time of Abraham (Genesis 18:1–8). This example shows that God (Christ in the Old Testament account) and faithful angels could manifest themselves in the physical domain as men.

When Christ was resurrected, He was resurrected with a body composed of SPIRIT, not matter. He was NOT resurrected with a physical body. That would have been quite impossible as with a physical body, He could not have gone through closed doors, nor could He have made Himself invisible. He just manifested Himself occasionally as a physical being.

We can find a description of the resurrected Christ in His glorified state in numerous passages of the Bible, and none of them implies that He has a physical body. For instance, we read in Revelation 1:14–16: "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a

furnace, and His voice the sound of many waters... and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength..." (compare also Revelation 2:18). A similar description of Christ, as He appeared in glory prior to His temporary existence as a human being, can be found in Ezekiel 1:26–28. This describes also His glorified state today, as the Father glorified Christ in His resurrection with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5).

And it is that same glory which will be bestowed on us in the First Resurrection (1 John 3:1–2; Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:49).

In the First Resurrection, we will have incorruptible spiritual bodies, when we are "raised in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:42–44).

We will be like Christ, bearing His very image (1 Corinthians 15:49), and Christ is the exact image of God the Father (2 Corinthians 4:4). We will be glorified God Beings, as the Father and Jesus Christ are glorified. We will in that sense look like Christ. It is that same glory which will be bestowed on us in the First Resurrection (1 John 3:1–2; Romans 8:18). Jesus Christ was the very first who was raised in the First Resurrection (Acts 26:23)—being the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). His followers will be resurrected in the same way as He was, at the time of His return.

Man-Like Appearance

When we can see Christ as He is, in His glorified state, we are told in God's Word that He has an appearance of a Man. Also, God the Father is described with a man-like appearance (compare Revelation 4:3; 5:1; 21:5; Daniel 7:9–10, 13). They are not described as animals. (Christ is referred to as a Lamb in the Book of Revelation, but only in a figurative sense, as He is the Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb, who took away the sins of the world).

They are not described in any way as women either. God is our Father, not our Mother; and Christ is the Son of God, not the Daughter of God.

Those in the First Resurrection are called the sons and daughters of God (2 Corinthians 6:18). They will have a glorified appearance as God does. But while God looks like a "Man," those who were women will look in their glorified state in such a way that they can be recognized to humans with their individual and unique features (which they had

in this life) when they manifest themselves to them; there is no biblical evidence that all humans made immortal will look like “men”, or that “women” turn to or are changed to “men” in their glorified state.

Even though God is male, He made man, in his physical appearance, as male and female (Genesis 1:27). They were made in the likeness of God (Genesis 5:1–2). They were not made in the likeness of animals. They had a head, a body, hands, feet, etc., reflecting God in His glorified state.

The human eye cannot see the glorified face of God and live; but Moses saw God’s glorified back when He passed by him (Exodus 33:18–23).

We read in 1 John 3:2 that we, when we are glorified, will SEE the returning Christ AS HE IS. This passage is interesting, as it implies that others who are not glorified, who are not in the Kingdom, will see Christ, too, but NOT AS HE IS.

They will see Him, even in glory, but not to the degree of glory that would kill them immediately. We [those who are resurrected at His return] will SEE Him *as He is*, but the world will not see Him in His full glory. For instance, we read in Revelation 1:7, that those who mourn over Christ’s return will “SEE Him, even they who pierced Him.” Now, those people who are mourning that Christ comes back won’t be in the Kingdom—at least not at that time. But it says that they SEE Him.

We also read, in Matthew 24:30, that all the tribes of the earth will mourn, when they SEE Christ return “on clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (compare also Revelation 19:11–16). Again, the tribes won’t be in the Kingdom of God, but they still see Him, the King of the Kingdom. They will recognize Him as the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. And remember, Christ comes back in glory, which is also described in Revelation 1:10–18. And He, as the SON of God, looks like a male—a “Man.” He does not look like a woman (or an animal) in His glorified state or in His physical manifestation.

Neither Male nor Female?

A most-misunderstood Scripture does not say that there will be neither male nor female in the resurrection to eternal life. This is a false citation. The Scripture says that those in the First Resurrection will not marry or are given in marriage as they will be like the

angels in heaven (Mark 12:25). This reference to angels does not say that we will be angels; nor, that we will all be “male” because many believe that angels are allegedly only “male” (many angels look like animals); rather, that we will not marry anymore and that we cannot die anymore as angels don’t marry and as they are immortal as well (Luke 20:35–36).

Even though we will look like Christ insofar as our outward glorified appearance is concerned (that is, as glorified God Beings, we will still have a glorified face, eyes, a mouth, ears, the shape of a human-like body with arms and feet etc.), how will we appear when we manifest ourselves to human beings?

How Will We Look in the First Resurrection?

Again, we can note many examples showing us how Christ appeared to humans so that they could see him (we cannot see a glorified God Being with our human eyes, except in a vision). From that we can ascertain how we will look when we manifest ourselves.

We read in Genesis 14:18–21 that Christ, as Melchizedek, appeared to Abraham, then called Abram, who gave Him the tithe of everything. Hebrews 7 confirms that Melchizedek was indeed Jesus Christ who lived at that time as High Priest among the people (compare verses 3, 8). He had not become a Man, but He lived for a while “as” a man; that is, He manifested Himself as a man. Abram knew who Melchizedek was, and it appears that this was the first time that he saw Him in His physical manifestation.

Before that occurrence, we read that the LORD “spoke” or “appeared” to him, but not in the way as He “appeared” to him in Genesis 14 and later in Genesis 18. There, Christ and two angels “appeared” to Abraham as “men” (verse 2) when they were about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. They ate and spoke with him (Genesis 18:1–15). But this does not mean that they actually WERE men—that is, flesh and blood human beings. They just manifested themselves AS human beings.

Abraham knew right away that one of the three was Christ, calling Him “My Lord” in verse 3 (compare also verses 27, 30, 32). The word is *Adonai*, which Abraham used in reference to God (compare Genesis 15:2). He recognized Christ, having seen Him before when He appeared to Him as Melchizedek. (In passing, the word *Adonai* is

actually a plural word, meaning “my lords”; the singular form is *adon*. This is another proof that Abraham knew that God consists of more than one Person.)

Melchizedek

Did Christ look like Melchizedek when He was born as a human being? One might not think so as He came from the tribe of Judah and His mother was Jewish, and as Christ had existed long before there was any human, let alone a Jew. This however overlooks the fact that God and Christ knew that there would be human beings, and that Christ would be born from the tribe of Judah, and this from the beginning of the world, before there was time. This is true for those whom God has predestined to be called in this day and age; it is most certainly true for Jesus. So, they both saw in the future and knew how Christ would look as a Man, and we might therefore conclude that He appeared in that form to Abraham, Moses, and to the other ancients of old.

Upon further scrutiny, we will see that the same is true for His appearance, as a Man, after His resurrection. He did not appear as a young child, nor as an animal or a woman, but as a Man.

But He was not recognized right away at times by His disciples—not because He looked unrecognizable, but, as we will discuss below, because of their fear or other limitations.

When He appeared to the apostles after His resurrection, they thought at first that He was a ghost or an apparition (Luke 24:36–42). Christ manifested Himself to the disciples as a being with flesh and bones. He even ate food in their presence to convince the disciples that it was He, not a spirit or a demon.

Not Recognized

In the case of the disciples having gone fishing, after Christ’s resurrection, they were on the lake and Jesus was at the shore (John 21:1–4), so the distance was far enough so that they were unable to recognize Him at first. Even before His death, there were times when they did not recognize Him, thinking at first that He was a ghost or an apparition (Mark 6:47–50).

When Mary Magdalene did not recognize Him at first at the grave, after His resurrection, it was perhaps because she did not see or look

at Him that closely (John 20:11–16; note verse 14: “She turned...”). She thought He was the gardener, and as an unmarried woman, it was the custom at that time (which Jesus did not uphold or teach) not to look at another man too closely or to engage in public in a conversation with Him, as we can see from the account of Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman, which surprised His disciples (John 4:27).

In Another Form

After His resurrection, Christ manifested Himself occasionally as a physical being, but at least on one occasion, He did so “in another form” (Mark 16:12). What is meant with that phrase?

Some have concluded that this terminology proves that Christ can or might appear just in any form He chooses. Some have even said that He could appear today in the form of a woman or an animal, or that in His glorified state, He has breasts like a woman. This is a preposterous and blasphemous concept.

The *Nelson Study Bible* states that “Jesus’ appearance in another form may indicate that He appeared differently to the two on the road than He had appeared to His followers before.” But this explanation is wrong, and the correct understanding shows us, too, how WE as members of the Family of God will appear or manifest ourselves to humans.

Appearing “Differently”

First of all, let us emphasize that part of the reason that the disciples on their way to Emmaus failed to recognize Christ was the fact that their eyes were closed and had to be opened (Luke 24:31), and that they did not expect to see Him at all, thinking He was dead and in the grave. We read that the disciples did not believe the women who claimed that they had seen Him alive (Luke 24:11).

The word “form” in the Greek is *morphe* and means “form, shape, outward appearance.” The *Benson Commentary* states that “he appeared in another form, or habit, namely, different from that which he formerly had when he conversed with them.”

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible adds the following thoughts:

“... he appeared in another form: it seems to have been the form, or habit of a gardener that he appeared in to Mary; since she thought

him to be one, and to be the gardener that belonged to the garden, in which the sepulchre was: but now it was in another form, or habit, that he appeared; very likely in the habit of a Scribe, or doctor; since he took upon him to expound the Scriptures to the persons he appeared to; as also took bread, and blessed it, when at supper with them...

"This is not to be understood of any change in the shape of his body, or the features of his face; for as soon as their eyes were opened, which had been before held, they knew him perfectly well: whereas, if there had been such an alteration made in him, that he could not have been known for the same, there would have been no need of holding their eyes, that they should not know him, Luke 24:16."

Jesus Christ manifested Himself in the way in which He looked as a human being. But He was not always recognized right away, as people did not know what to look for, and because their eyes had not been opened.

When Christ manifested Himself, He did so in such a way that those who had known Him could recognize Him. Sometimes, they recognized Him by His voice before they looked at Him closely to recognize Him by His appearance; at other times, they recognized Him by particular mannerisms, which they had been familiar with while He was in the flesh.

We Can Be Recognized

In the same way, we will manifest ourselves to those who knew us before our death, so that they will be able to recognize us. When we were male, we will manifest ourselves as a male. In fact, even as glorified Beings, a man will still have a glorified "male"-appearance, not a glorified female appearance. The reverse is true for those who were female in this life. They do not suddenly become "males" in the resurrection, nor will they manifest themselves as males when they appear to human beings. Furthermore, and this should go without saying, they will not appear as animals or with animal-like features which many of the angels possess.

As Christ apparently manifested Himself as the Man whom people were familiar with when He died, so it stands to reason that we will do likewise, but we will also be able to make ourselves known to those who only knew us in our younger years. We may do so by our

voice, mannerisms or the recitation of other peculiar and unique circumstances or experiences, so that they will be without any doubt that we will be the ones who had known and dealt with them when we were in the flesh.

Chapter 20

What Are Spiritual Bodies?

Believe it or not, there is great confusion in the “Christian” world on that issue, and most commentaries and Bible experts have it wrong. And as a consequence, they do not understand at all what our potential really is, and what bodies we will have in the first resurrection.

It starts with a complete misunderstanding as to what Paul says in the so-called resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians 15.

We read in verses 35–49:

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do NOT SOW THAT BODY THAT SHALL BE, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God GIVES IT A BODY as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh... there are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies... There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body... And as we have borne the image of the man of dust (Adam), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man (Jesus Christ).”

Paul tells us in the above passage that the physical body which dies is NOT the same body “that shall be.” Rather, God GIVES us a spiritual body “as He pleases.” He does not resurrect our physical body and then change it into spirit. In fact, Paul says that in the resurrection to eternal life, we will be “absent from the [physical] body” (2 Corinthians 5:8). 2 Corinthians 5 further explains that God will give Christians a new kind of body (verses 1–4). Only the bodies of those in Christ who are

alive when Christ returns will be changed into spirit, while the dead in Christ will be RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

When we die in Christ, our bodies decay. The bodies of those who died in Christ thousands of years ago have completely decayed. They became dust and ashes, as God said that they would (Genesis 3:19). The only exception was the resurrection to eternal life of Jesus Christ, who was merely dead for three days and three nights, and whose physical body did not decay, before He was resurrected to immortality (Acts 2:25–27). When God the Father resurrected Jesus Christ, He changed His physical body (which was still in the grave) into a spiritual body. That is why Christ could later walk through closed doors, and why He could make Himself visible and invisible, as He pleased.

Christ, when He again became a Spirit Being, which is invisible to the human eye, could manifest Himself as a human being, even so much so that He appeared to have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39–40). Of course, as a Spirit Being, He did not really have flesh and bone, but He was able to manifest Himself in such a way. Jesus did speak of “a spirit” not having flesh and bones as He did (verse 39). However, He was speaking of demonic spirits not being able to manifest themselves in the flesh.

In his book, *“The Incredible Human Potential,”* Herbert W. Armstrong explained the resurrection to eternal life in this way (pages 91–92, hard cover):

“If one has received the Holy Spirit, then in the Resurrection, God will provide a Spirit body, formed and shaped by the Spirit mold. The resurrected being will be composed of Spirit, not matter as the human model was...”

“It is through the spirit in man (combined with the Holy Spirit) that God will raise Christians with immortal spiritual bodies. The Bible reveals that the physical bodies of Christians will cease to exist in the first resurrection. They will be given new bodies composed of spirit—no longer susceptible to pain and suffering and no longer subject to death and destruction!”

We read in Romans 8:29–30 that God will glorify those whom He has called in this day and age. It is explained in verse 29 that He predestined those whom He foreknew “to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

When we are changed to or raised in glory, we will bear the image of the glorified Jesus Christ.

We also read in 1 John 3:2: “We know when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Christ will return in glory—in the glory of the Father and in His own glory. When we will be like Him, we will also be glorified. We will also appear in glory, as Colossians 3:4 states. We shall see Him as He is—and we cannot see the glorified Christ as He is, unless we ourselves are glorified Spirit Beings.

If we died in Christ, we will be resurrected in glory. We will be united together with Him in the “likeness” of His resurrection (Romans 6:5). If we are still alive at the time of Christ’s return, we will be changed into glory—and that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the time of the last trumpet, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15.

Philippians 3:21 tells us that Christ will transform our lowly body that it will be conformed to His glorious body.

The Resurrection of Christ

BUT, there is a horrible confusion of “Christian” authors regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For instance, as mentioned before, the “*Compact Bible Commentary*” of the “*Nelson’s Compact Series*” states the following regarding 1 Thesalonians 4:16:

“Clearly the [first] Resurrection will be a PHYSICAL resurrection in which BODILY existence will be restored... The resurrected bodies of Christians will be like that of Christ... incorruptible and immortal, and yet they will be bodies of FLESH and BONE...”

Spiritual Bodies

Much of this confusion has to do with a complete misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches about the “spiritual body” which we will have in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15.

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible says:

“It is raised a spiritual body; not as to substance, but as to its quality; it will not be changed into a spirit; our Lord’s risen body, to which ours will be conformed, was not a spirit, but, as before, consisted of flesh and bones: but the body will then be subject to the spirit and

soul of man; it will be employed in spiritual service...

"... there is a spiritual body; such as the body of Christ now is, and as will be the bodies of the risen saints..."

The Pulpit Commentary writes:

"A spiritual body. The apparent contradiction in terms is inevitable. The thing meant is a body which is not under the sway of corporeal desires or of intellectual and passionate impulses, but is wholly dominated by the Spirit, and therefore has no desire or capacity to fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

This is all utter nonsense.

Of course, the word "spiritual" CAN refer to concepts which do not imply something *composed of Spirit*. For instance, we speak of spiritual growth; spiritual Jew; law is spiritual; spiritual understanding; spiritual organism; spiritual betrothal; spiritual veil; spiritual blessing; spiritual gifts; spiritual darkness; we are spiritual; spiritually minded; Abraham's spiritual seed; spiritual brethren; spiritual fellowship; spiritual Israel; spiritual healing.

But "spiritual" can ALSO mean, something which is composed of spirit.

Composed of Spirit

When 1 Corinthians 15:44 speaks of the fact that we will have spiritual bodies, Strong #4152 defines the Greek word *pneumatikos*, translated as "spiritual," as being derived from Strong's #4151, *pneuma*, saying that it can refer to "a spirit, an angel, demon, or (divine) God."

As a consequence, several German translations render the phrase ["spiritual body"] as "Spirit body" ["geistiger Leib"] Cp. *Zürcher Bible* 1970; *Pattloch Bible*; *Schlachter Bible* 1951; and *Elberfelder Bible* 1905.

This is the correct understanding. We will have bodies composed of Spirit.

God does not have a physical body which somehow consists of flesh and bones, being subject to the Spirit. Neither does Jesus Christ—He did not have such a "body" before He became a Man, and He received the same glory which He had BEFORE He became a Man. And as we will be as the Father and the Son are, we will not have such bodies either. It has been correctly stated that we will be God as God is God.

We saw earlier that God has form and shape. He has a body

composed of Spirit. The same is true for Jesus Christ.

Christ is a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). He is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17–18: “by the Lord, the Spirit”). God the Father is a Spirit (John 4:24, compare *the Authorized Version; the American Standard Version; the English Revised Version; Webster’s Bible Translation; the Geneva Bible; and Young’s Literal Translation*).

Likewise, the *Elberfelder Bible 1905* and the *Luther Bible 1545* [“Gott ist ein Geist.”]

God the Father and Jesus Christ are Spirit Beings. They do not have physical bodies, but they have bodies composed of Spirit. The same is true for angels.

Angels are spirits (Hebrews 1:7, 14; Revelation 1:4). We will be like them in the sense that we will be spirits as well (Luke 20:35–36; Matthew 22:30). We will have the glory of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26).

And as the Father is a Spirit and the Son is a Spirit, so will we be “Spirits” or “God Beings” (John 3:6).

When we read in 1 Corinthians 15 that we will have “spiritual bodies,” what is clearly meant is that we will have “Spirit bodies”—bodies composed of Spirit.

Chapter 21

What Will We Remember?

When we are God Beings, will we remember our own past sins and the sins of others, including the sins of our close friends and family members? It will depend on whether or not they are righteous or evil (compare Psalm 34:15–16). Simply stated, those who are in God’s Kingdom will know one another, but those who rebel will cease to exist or be remembered.

We do not believe in an ever-burning hell fire which will torture the wicked for all eternity, while those “saved in heaven” will continually hear their cries. At the same time, it would be difficult to imagine that we will constantly remember loved ones or close friends who turned away from God and committed the unpardonable sin. Generally speaking, we will put the memories of those out of our minds; it will be as if they had never existed (Obadiah 16). [However, in the case of King Saul who apparently committed the unpardonable sin, his deeds of rebellion and his consultation of a witch and his encounter with a demon, pretending to be Samuel, have been recorded in the Bible, for everyone to read.]

Remembering Sins?

This leads us to the next question as to whether we will remember our own sins which we repented of, or the sins of others who received forgiveness from God because of their repentance.

David’s Sins

We read in 1 Kings 15:5: “David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” The account of David’s transgressions “in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” can be found in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12. First, David

committed adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba; then, he tried to cover up his sin in different ways; failing that, he had Uriah murdered in war, so that he could take Bathsheba to become his wife. We read that "the thing that David had done displeased [or better: "was evil in the sight of"] the LORD" (2 Samuel 11:27).

David's conduct "in the matter of Uriah" constituted a great sin. This does not mean, however, that this was the only sin that David ever committed. The passage in 1 Kings 15:5, quoted above, must be read in context with all the other Scriptures on this subject. For instance, note the following statement in 1 Kings 14:8, "... yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do ONLY what was right in My eyes." Taken all by itself, this Scripture would say that David did not sin at all—not even in the "matter of Uriah."

The Truth is, of course, that David sinned in many different ways. The Bible makes it very clear that everyone sins—even after conversion—and that there is no human being [with the only exception of Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth] who does not sin (compare 1 Kings 8:46).

We are also told in Scripture that God forgives us our sins and even forgets about them, once we confess our sins to God (1 John 1:9). In that case, God cleanses us from all unrighteousness (same verse). He will remember our sins no more (compare Jeremiah 31:34).

David had a loyal heart. When he sinned, he repented and asked God for forgiveness. He did not try to hide his sins, but he was truly heart-broken. He desired earnestly to be forgiven. When God forgave David, He removed his sins—not to be remembered anymore. That is why God could say, "David has kept My commandments. He followed Me with all his heart, to do ONLY what was right in My eyes." (Compare, again, 1 Kings 14:8.)

We also understand, of course, that God forgave David his sins "in the matter of Uriah." Still, in the one passage, in 1 Kings 15:5, God brings this matter one more time to our attention. Not, because God had not forgiven David, but because this was a sin that belonged to a slightly different category. It was not the unpardonable sin, to be sure, since David will be in the Kingdom of God (compare Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5).

However, it was not a sin that was committed “in ignorance”—because of a temporary, passing weakness that had “snuck up” on David. This was a planned, premeditated, carefully designed sin. David thought through very diligently how to cover up his sin with Bathsheba, until he resorted to the murder of Uriah. God brings up the “matter with Uriah” one more time, because He was terribly grieved that David would have acted in such a way—and He wanted to impress on the reader the awful consequences of that sin for David and his entire household.

When we sin and subsequently confess our sin to God, God is faithful to forgive us. Upon forgiveness (compare Romans 11:27), God will remember our sins no more (compare Hebrews 8:12). This should show us that we must strive to do the same. When we forgive, we must also forget. David sinned in many different ways—as we all do—but he obtained complete forgiveness from God, as his heart was right. In God’s eyes, David kept God’s commandments; following God with all his heart, to do ONLY what was right in God’s eyes.

God Will Not “Remember” Our Sins

What, exactly, is meant by the phrase that God will remember our sins no more?

Please realize that God saw to it that certain sins of David were recorded, for everyone to read. In addition to David’s sin in the matter of Uriah, some of his other sins were recorded as well, such as his fighting in war and numbering his army. Furthermore, sins of other righteous men and women were recorded: Moses’s sin of murder and his later outburst before Israel, which prevented him from entering the Promised Land; Aaron and Miriam’s murmuring against Moses; Abraham and Isaac’s lies; Abraham and Sarah’s adultery because of lack of faith; Jacob’s deceit towards his father Isaac; Rachel’s theft of her father’s idols; Peter’s sin of lying and denying Christ three times and his hypocrisy towards Gentile Christians; and Paul’s persecution of Christians when he was still known as Saul. The list could go on and on. We also believe that Solomon came to repentance at the end of his life, but his prior terrible sins were included in the Bible.

How do we understand and explain this in light of the fact that God forgives and forgets sins once they are repented of? The sins of

those were forgiven (we assume that all of those men and women listed above will be in the Kingdom of God as God Beings), but their prior sins were not erased from the written Word of God—the Bible—and we are told that they were recorded as an example for our benefit today (1 Corinthians 10:11), and that ALL Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

In addition, we do not believe that Adam and Eve or Judas Iscariot have committed the unpardonable sin, since they never had God's Holy Spirit, which means, that they will be given their opportunity to accept God's Way of Life in the Second Resurrection; still, everyone knows and will know about [some of] their sins which they committed, as they are recorded in God's Word. Jesus even said about Judas that it would have been better if he had not been born. We do not believe that these statements will ever be removed from the Bible. But Adam, Eve and Judas will come back to life, and will be offered true repentance, which they will hopefully accept. But again, their sins are recorded in the Bible, and the books of the Bible will be opened to the understanding of all who will be in the Great White Throne Judgment period (Revelation 20:12).

When we sin and do not repent, then our sins will stand against us. God will not forgive and forget them. The same is true for our friends and relatives. If they sin in this life, without repenting, God (and we as God Beings in the Kingdom) will not forgive and forget those sins prior to their repentance, but repentance will be offered to them in the Great White Throne Judgment period so that their sins can be forgiven.

Forgiving and Forgetting?

But what about sins which have been repented of? As we saw, generally, God (and we as God Beings) will forget those sins, by totally erasing them from our minds, but there are exceptions.

Clearly, one exception are the sins which are recorded in the Bible. Even though God has forgiven those upon repentance, He has not totally erased those from memory, but they were recorded for our benefit so that we can learn from the mistakes of others and do not make them ourselves. But in every case, God casts all repented sins behind His back and into the depths of the sea, so that when they

are sought for, they shall not be found IN THE SENSE that God will never charge us with them. He does not retain them in His mind in the sense that He will not revisit what has passed.

When God says in Jeremiah 31:34 and in Isaiah 43:25 that He will “remember” their sins no more and that He will blot out their transgressions, He draws also a comparison between animal sacrifices in the Old Testament which had to be given continuously and which could never forgive sins, but were just a reminder or “remembrance” of sins (Hebrews 10:3), and Christ’s Sacrifice which brings about total and complete forgiveness and freedom from eternal death, so that God will “blot out” the sins and “remember” them no more (compare Acts 3:19). German Bibles translate Jeremiah 31:34 as, “I will not think of [or: about] their sins anymore.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* and the *Revised English Bible* say that God will never more “call” their sin “to mind.”

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible adds this comment in regard to Isaiah 43:25: “God will not remember the sins of his people against them; having forgiven them, he will never punish them for them, which is meant by remembering them; see Jeremiah 14:10.”

The *Jamieson Fausset and Brown commentary* agrees, stating: “When God forgives, He forgets; that is, treats the sinner as if He had forgotten his sins.”

Under the New Covenant, God will “take away” our sins (Romans 11:27)—He will not hold them against us, if we repent of them. Jeremiah 50:20 tells us that “... 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.”

In God’s mind, forgiven sins have never been committed. The wall of separation between God and us, which was erected due to sin (Isaiah 59:1–2), is broken down when we repent, and access to God is again unhindered. In most cases, God will completely wipe out from His mind any memory of repented sins, but as we saw, in some cases, sins were recorded to teach us a lesson. But in all cases, no repented sin will ever be “remembered” so that man would be charged with it. As we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), we must also strive to forgive and forget sins of others who repent... and this includes our own sins of which we repent and for which we have received forgiveness. But even if we may not be able to achieve in this

life a total lack of memory regarding past sins, we must always truly forgive others who repent, without ever holding grudges or bringing charges against them.

Chapter 22

What Will We Do?

Those who are called and chosen in this day and age, are to qualify for entrance into God's Kingdom, when Jesus Christ returns to this earth. But what, exactly, will they be? And what powers will they have?

The Bible tells us that we, who are called today, will be what Christ is today. We will be like Him, as He is. We will share the Father's and His very divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The only exception is that we will not have the same authority as Christ, as Christ has not the same authority as the Father. God is—and always will be—a hierarchical Family—with God the Father on top, under Him Jesus Christ, and under Christ those who are to be born into the very Family of God.

But even though Christ is under the Father, He still has—and always had, as a God Being—the unlimited power to create life. God the Father created everything—the visible as well as the invisible—through and by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1–2; Colossians 1:15–16).

Christ will establish this Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, on this earth. It is a Kingdom ruled by God. It is a Kingdom composed of God—the Father and Jesus Christ. But remember... we also will be in that Kingdom. The Bible is very clear that whoever is in the Kingdom of God must actually be God. We must become God Beings, sharing in Christ's glory, the firstborn of many brethren. We are already called His children, but we have not been glorified yet. And when we are glorified at the time of our resurrection to eternal life, we will be entering the Kingdom of God, as literal God Beings, as glorified Sons and Daughters of God, made immortal.

"You Are Gods"

As we have seen in this booklet, that we are to become Members of the God Family, or God Beings, is clearly taught in Scripture. Christ Himself confirmed this human potential in John 10:31–36: "Then the

Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.' Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, You are gods?" If He called them gods, to whom the Word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, You are blaspheming, because I said, I am the Son of God?'"

What is Jesus Christ telling us here? That He, the Son of God who had become a Man, would be God again. But also, that it is man's potential to become God Beings as well. Although stated in a present tense, Christ was mainly referring to the future, speaking about future things as if they already existed (compare Romans 4:17). God created man so that man could become God—a Member of the God Family... as Christ is the Son of God, so will we be Sons and Daughters of God. Of course, God the Father will always be greatest of all, and Christ will always be greater than we. But still—we will be God Beings in the Family of God, literal Children of our loving Father, and Brothers and Sisters of our Elder Brother Jesus Christ. What an awesome potential—what a destiny!

The fact that we, as God Beings, will of course have the ability to create, as God the Father and Jesus Christ create, is expressly confirmed in Scripture.

Life-Giving Spirits

1 Corinthians 15:45 tells us that Christ is "a life-giving spirit." That is, He is a Spirit Being who can give and create LIFE. In fact, that is what He did before He became a human being. That is what He is doing today, and what He will continue to do after His return. We know, for instance, from the Book of Revelation that all living things in the oceans and rivers will have died before His return (Revelation 16), but we also read in several passages that there will be fish in the Millennium (Ezekiel 47). This shows that God will create LIFE—in this case, physical fish. He created life when the surface of the earth was renewed; and He created ("had prepared" or "had made") a great fish to swallow up Jonah (Jonah 1:17).

When Christ returns to set up the government of God on this earth, the earth will be in a terrible state, still suffering from the aftermath of nuclear wars and waste. And so, we read that the ruins will be rebuilt; and that the earth will become a beautiful paradise. We will assist Jesus Christ to beautify it, which includes, CREATING physical life.

Please note Isaiah 58:10–12: “You shall be like a spring of water whose waters do not fail” (or: “never run dry,” *New Jerusalem Bible*). Primarily, this talks about our role in the Millennium, directing the rebuilding of old places that had become waste. BUT, there is also an overriding meaning, hinting at our ultimate potential—to be a continual spring of living fresh water regarding others, giving them health and REAL life.

Notice again Christ’s words in John 7:37–38, where we read that out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water. That is, God’s Spirit will flow out of us to create LIFE. Christ is a life-giving Spirit, and so we will be, because we will be God too, and we will be like Christ, as He is. We, as God Beings, will have the power and awesome privilege to heal and create, UNDER the leadership of God the Father and Jesus Christ. God’s living waters in us will flow out of our hearts like rivers of living waters.

In addition, please recall that Christ said in John 4:14, referring to the Holy Spirit, that the “water that I give him will become in him a FOUNTAIN of water springing up into everlasting life.” We will be fountains of living water, leading to life.

An interesting Scripture can also be found in the book of Proverbs. Although it speaks primarily about our own mind and its effect on our own body, it can also be understood as referring to the mind of others and the effect on others. Notice Proverbs 14:30: “A sound heart is life to the body”—not just our own body, but also the body of others. To have a sound mind is a result of the Holy Spirit, which is a Spirit of soundness. And with God’s Holy Spirit, we will be able to impart real “life” to the physical world.

The biblical Truth is overwhelming. Once we have entered the Family of God as immortal God Beings, we will have the same abilities and capabilities which God the Father and Jesus Christ have. We will be judging and ruling over angels. God the Father and Jesus Christ may use us to heal people. We will be assisting Christ in judging mankind.

Of course, we will never act independently, but always in complete harmony with and under God the Father's and Jesus Christ's authority and guidance.

Our Role in the Second Resurrection

This then may pose an interesting question. As we have seen in this booklet, God the Father resurrected Christ and gave Him eternal life and the glory which He used to have before He became a man; and the Father will raise the dead through Jesus. Could this indicate, then, that we, who will be resurrected by the Father through Jesus and receive eternal life in the God Family, will also have a part in resurrecting others in the Second Resurrection, especially our loved ones who died without having been given the opportunity for salvation? We will of course always be subject to the Will of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, as Christ is also always subject to the Will of the Father. To state it differently, the Will of Christ is and always will be IDENTICAL with the Will of the Father. Likewise, our Will—the Will of immortal God Beings in God's Family—will always be totally identical with the Will of the Father and of the Son. And as the Holy Spirit, like living waters, flows out of the Father and the Son, so the Holy Spirit—God's power—will also flow out of us as well (John 4:13–14; 7:37–39).

The Bible does not say what part we will have in the Second Resurrection, *if any*; but it is most certainly an intriguing thought to contemplate that we might be right there to greet our relatives and friends when they come out of their graves in the Second Resurrection. Nothing in the Bible would in any way prohibit that possibility, but we will have to wait until God reveals to us what He has in store for us.

The Bible tells us very clearly that we will rule for ever and ever. When we become Members of God's Family, we will be ruling this earth, as we have seen, for a thousand years, together with Christ who received His authority and power from God the Father. But what after that? What is going to happen once the thousand years have expired? Our reign will never stop. Notice Revelation 22:4–5, which speaks about a time long after the 1000 years: "They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads [the name of God—a FAMILY NAME— will be their name as well]...the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

What will we do for all eternity? Over what will we reign, forever and ever?

New Heavens and a New Earth

Ultimately, God will create new heavens and “a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” The new heavens (including the entire universe) and the new earth will no longer be physical, consisting of matter, but they will be spiritual—consisting of Spirit. The heavenly Jerusalem will come down from heaven, after the physical earth and the physical heavens are burned up, and after God creates new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:7, 10–13) which will remain (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). 2 Corinthians 4:18 tells us: “...For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Lamsa renders Hebrews 12:27 in this way: “And these words, once more, signify the CHANGE of things which may be shaken, because they are made in order that things which cannot be shaken may remain.”

Romans 8:18–23 tells us very clearly what those invisible things will be: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption INTO the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [sonship], the redemption of our body.”

We saw in verse 21 that the creation will be delivered from corruption “into” (*eis* in Greek) the glorious liberty of the children of God. This physical creation, patterned after God’s spiritual creation, waits to be delivered from corruption to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. The glorious freedom, which the universe will receive, includes freedom from death. In that new universe, DEATH will be unknown, and so will decay and corruption. In order to obtain such freedom from death and corruption, this universe will have to be changed into SPIRIT, as we also will be changed into Spirit Beings.

In this way, the new heavens and the new earth will remain, for only the things that the human eye cannot see will remain.

What will remain is the new earth and the new universe, consisting of Spirit (what the human eye cannot see). The physical existence will not remain forever; that is, the physical earth and the physical universe, which can be seen by the human eye, will be changed into Spirit (which cannot be seen by the human eye).

We do not know how much time will transpire after the end of the Third Resurrection period and before the physical earth and the heavens will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:11–12); new heavens and a new earth will be created (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1); and the heavenly Jerusalem will descend to earth (Revelation 21:2). As Spirit Beings, time will be of no consequence for us. For God, 1,000 years are just as one day (2 Peter 3:8) and “like a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4).

We need to remember that the Spirit world was first, and God created spiritual beings first and “things” within the Spirit world. We read of a heavenly spiritual city, a spiritual temple, a spiritual mountain, a spiritual altar and a spiritual tabernacle, as well as spiritual trumpets, spiritual clothes etc. After this spiritual creation, the physical universe and the earth were created—first the spiritual, and then the physical.

But in the distant future, that process will be reversed—first the physical, and then the spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:46). When man was created, he was created physical with the potential of becoming a Spirit Being. And so, the physical world and universe will ultimately be changed to consist of Spirit as well.

What exactly God has in store for us after the new heavens and the new earth have been created, we don’t know. But we do know that God says that we will rule forever and ever, and that His peace and government over the new earth and the entire new universe will have no end. God the Father will dwell on the newly-created earth, consisting of Spirit, and the new Jerusalem, consisting of Spirit, will come down from the third heaven, after the physical earth and the physical universe have been dissolved. Undoubtedly, the new earth will be God’s headquarters over the entire (new) universe, and it appears that we will be assisting God, in the way that He directs.

Conclusion

In this booklet, much has been revealed about the nature of God and the destiny of Man, but there is so much more to be said. For additional information, we especially recommend the study of the following free booklets:

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

God IS a Family

Is God a Trinity?

Jesus Christ—a Great Mystery!

Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?

The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation

Angels, Demons and the Spirit World

Heavens and Earth...Before and After the First Man!

Are You Already Born Again?

The Meaning of God's Fall Holy Days

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are Jews and Christians at Odds With Jesus Christ?
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Are You Already Born Again?
Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?
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