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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

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Come**

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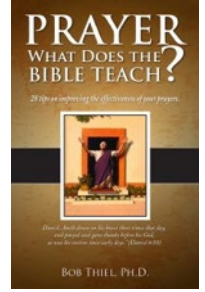
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About the Front Cover: This photograph used to be available at Wikipedia, which has since removed it. It was attributed to Eduardo Frei Ruiz Tagle. Notice that it shows a mix of male and female leaders of different religious groups

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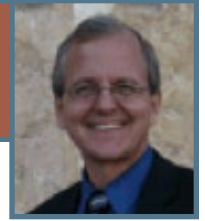
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PROTESTANTS: BEWARE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT!

What is going on in the Protestant world? Are Protestants turning back to their 'mother church' in Rome? Does the Bible warn about this? What are Catholic plans and prophecies related to this? Is Protestantism doomed?

Since the Continuing Church of God is not Protestant, why bother with any of this?

Well the messages in the Bible are to be taken to all people (Matthew 28:19-20; Revelation 22:9-10), and since there are a couple of hundred million, at least nominal Protestants, they should be told what is to be and what will affect them!

Background on the Ecumenical Movement

Growing up Roman Catholic, I remember the words to a hymn that went like the following (which is from my memory):

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. And we pray that our unity may one day be restored.

The prayer that the song makes reference to basically is for the non-Catholic faiths to accept the authority of the Vatican and cease to be separate from Rome. Specifically, the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant faiths, but also including others as well. I remember singing that hymn in the late 1960s. That was after Vatican II, a conference that seemed to awaken many in the Roman Catholic Church to attempt to work towards overcoming theological divides between Rome and others.

The ecumenical movement is having major effects and impacts.

On June 24, 2015, Pope Francis stated:

Looking at the present state of the ecumenical landscape and the world at large, we have to confess that divisions among Christians are there, that we are not sharing the gifts of the Triune God and the fruits of the works of our hands through the holy Eucharistic fellowship.

Note that "the Triune God," which was officially declared at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. is to be what the groups will have in common.

How Do Catholics Plan to Accomplish This?

The Catholics have an office called the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. It is currently held by a former Swiss Bishop, now Cardinal, named Kurt Koch. He is supposed to have great insight with the "reformation" churches (meaning the Protestants) and also has held meetings with Eastern Orthodox and Protestant leaders. He is ecumenical and is one I have been watching for some time.

Over the past several decades, the Catholics have held a lot of ecumenical meetings.

In terms of the Lutherans, two ground breaking events related to their ecumenical dialogue was a joint statement on the doctrine of Justification by Faith in 1983 and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) on October 31, 1999. Having looked the JDDJ over, it does not look like anything that Martin Luther, himself, would have agreed to.

Yet, some feel that the JDDJ agreement has already effectively eliminated the need for Protestantism as the 'justification doctrine' is seen by many to have been amongst the most significantly theological differences between Roman Catholicism and Martin Luther's movement.

Much more ecumenical compromise is expected from Protestants and the Church of Rome.

Anglican Palmer's and Televangelist Copeland's Views

In February 2014, I watched a video where the Charismatic Protestant Kenneth Copeland endorsed Catholicism. He also had a visiting Anglican bishop speak. In this video, Anglican Episcopal Bishop Tony Palmer (who since died) and Kenneth Copeland encouraged ecumenical unity with Catholicism.

Tony Palmer also said:

I have come in the Spirit of Elijah...to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers...to prepare the way of the Lord...Elijah will come before the Second Coming...The spirit of Elijah is the spirit of reconciliation...We know for a thousand years, there was one church called the catholic church... Catholic does not mean Rome... Redeem what belongs to you...We are Catholic... Division destroys our unity...Fear keeps us divided... most of that fear is based upon propaganda...Brothers and sisters, Luther's protests are over...The protests have been over for 15 years...If there is no more protests, how can there be a Protestant church...We now teach the same gospel, we now teach the same faith...The protest is over, the protest is over.

Of course, Tony Palmer did NOT come in the Spirit of Elijah, but a spirit of the world. The "faith" and gospel that these ecumenical groups teach is one that the Apostle Paul warned against (Galatians 1:6-9).

Contrary to Tony Palmer's assertions, the Greco-Roman church was NOT Christ's church for the first 1000 years as there was a split no later than the second century in Rome from the Church of God (see some details in the free booklet Continuing History of the Church of God).

Tony Palmer mentioned that the 1999 JDDJ agreement. He said that agreement ended the primary disagreements between Church of Rome and the Protestants. That is why he declared that the protests were over and told people that they were once again Catholic.

After Tony Palmer spoke, a mainly translated message from Pope Francis was shown in which Francis said:

God is working all over the world... We are separated... We all share the blame... And let us pray to the Lord that He unites us all... Let God complete the job He has done... He will complete this miracle of unity.

Realize that improper unity with those who do not teach the true gospel is NOT the work of God! It also should be noted that while the pontiff wants a 'miracle,' the 'miracles' associated with the coming ecumenical unity are warned against in the Bible (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 13:11-18).

As far as blame, yes the Church of Rome and the Protestants have a lot of blame, but the biggest blame is perhaps their failure to misunderstand the following:

3...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for

all delivered to the saints (Jude 3)

Because they do not understand original and real Christianity, many falsely think that the Church of Rome had the original faith before and that it has it now. This is biblically outrageous, but sadly it is what many think.

Kenneth Copeland, related to Pope Francis' message, said the following:

Glory, glory, glory...Father...we agree with him in his quest...for the unity of the body of faith.

After this, Kenneth Copeland sent a message back to Pope Francis:

My dear sir... Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart... We love you... Our desire sir, is in the fourth chapter of the Book of the Ephesians...unity... Thank you sir, we do bless and receive your blessing... We thank God for you...Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen, amen... I'm telling you. I'm telling you right now. Heaven is thrilled over this. Thank you Lord.

Yet, "Heaven," meaning God, is not thrilled by this.

Shortly, thereafter this video was played:

Francis met with the important 'evangelical leaders' plan for the alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical, or rather establish a "unity in diversity". The meeting was held at the Vatican June 24, 2014 at the Palace of Santa Marta. Here are the names of those who met with him: John and Carol Arnott (founder of Catch The Fire), Kenneth Copeland (founder of KCM Ministries), James Robison (founder of Life Outreach Int), Geoff Tunnicliffe (Head of Worldwide Evangelical Alliance that is the World Evangelical Alliance).

The Pope also spoke in South Korea later that Summer and attracted Protestants to a massive Mass.

Many are Endorsing the Ecumenical Message

Many do not realize that the famous Protestant evangelist Billy Graham made a deal with the Church of Rome years ago. According to E. Bynum, Billy Graham in 1948 taught against Catholicism, but a later he changed his mind:

In 1948, Graham said, "The three gravest menaces faced by orthodox Christianity are communism, Roman Catholicism, and Mohammedanism," NOW, he is continually saying nice things about the Catholics.

In 1963 Dr. Graham spoke at Belmont Abbey College, a North Carolina Catholic school. On Nov. 21, 1967, he returned to Belmont Abbey to receive an honorary degree. At that time he made a shocking statement. He said, that he “knew of no greater honor” than the receiving of this degree. Then the shocker comes when he said, “The gospel that built this school and the gospel that brings me here tonight is still the way to salvation.”

More and more Protestants are supporting the Vatican’s ecumenical agenda and gospel.

Televangelist Joel Osteen met with Pope Francis in 2014 (in his case, June 5th) and expressed pleasure with the Pope’s ecumenical agenda. Joel Osteen mainly preaches self-improvement on his telecast. He is among the more influential Protestant leaders in the USA.

Perhaps I should mention that my wife and I visited Trinity Broadcast Network’s (TBN) Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida in late 2014. Its Church of All Nations resembles the Coliseum in Rome. There is also a display of Crouch family antiques included of a lot of Roman Catholic ornaments, like several Monstrances. A monstrance is something used to venerate the eucharistic host that Roman Catholics use as a substitute for the type of bread Jesus used for Passover.

TBN was founded by the late Paul Crouch. His son Andrew Crouch is one of the two editors for the improperly named publication, Christianity Today which has long endorsed aspects of the ecumenical movement. On November 25, 2014 it had an article titled What Was the Best News of 2014? Notice the first item:

“Engagement between evangelicals and Catholics has gone to a whole new level. In June, I had a three-hour project meeting with Pope Francis—with no agenda. In my tenure, I have not seen that kind of openness. There’s a shift taking place under Francis. He seems clearly geared toward evangelicals.” ~Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general, World Evangelical Alliance

Gaining acceptance by the pontifex maximus of Rome is certainly NOT THE BEST NEWS OF 2014. It is a prelude to the rise of the final Babylonian system that the Bible condemns. Yet, many within the Protestant world keep endorsing aspects of it.

Notice some news items from 2015:

As Pope Francis traveled to the United States last month week for a six-day visit, megachurch leaders

Rick Warren, T.D. Jakes, Robert Jeffress and Joel Osteen expressed their excitement and support for the papal pomp and circumstance. Pastor Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Church in Dallas said, “I have great respect for Pope Francis. He’s a humble Christ follower. We all can learn from him.” Jeffress went on to say, “I have much more in common with my Catholic friends than I do even with liberal Baptists because we are fighting together against a common enemy, the kingdom of darkness.” (Gendron Mike. Evangelicals Applaud Pope’s Visit. PTG Newsletter, November 2015)

More than half of evangelical pastors say Pope Francis is their brother in Christ. More than one-third say they value the pope’s view on theology, and 3 in 10 say he has improved their view of the Catholic Church. Those are among the findings of a new study of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors, released this week from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. Overall, the survey found that many Protestant pastors have taken a liking to Pope Francis. Nearly 4 in 10 say the pope, known for his humility and concern for the poor, has had a positive impact on their opinions of the Catholic Church. Almost two-thirds view Pope Francis as a genuine Christian and “brother in Christ.” (Green LC. From Antichrist to Brother in Christ: How Protestant Pastors View the Pope Christianity Today, September 24, 2015)

The ecumenical movement has been going on for some time, but it seems to be accelerating and is taking many forms. More and more Protestant leaders are falling for it.

In 2016, the pro-Vatican news agency Zenit asked British Methodist minister Tim Macquiban How is Pope Francis advancing ecumenical relations? Here is his answer:

All that Pope Francis says and does, particularly now in this Year of Mercy, opens doors once shut and the wind of change blows through. His warmth for those who are other, whether Christian or not, is evidence of God’s love reaching out to all.

But the Bible says that God, not a human, opens and closes the doors:

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”: 8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength,

have kept My word, and have not denied My name.
(Revelation 3:7-8)

While being friendly is fine, what is being opened now by Pope Francis is not of God.

In 2016, Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Vatican, Archbishop David Moxon, was asked by Zenit, How is Pope Francis advancing ecumenical relations? He responded with:

In every way. He is beginning to advance many of the hopes and ideas of the ecumenical papal encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*. Also, by his own natural extroversion and genuine love for other churches and ecclesial communities he is making 'ecumenical' personable and attractive.

Pope Francis is not doing this in every way (he is overlooking many scriptures), but he wants it badly. On May 6, 2016, he even said his Church would work for that unity and that he dreamed of a humane European utopia to be accomplished through human efforts.

From Antichrist to Brothers in Christ?

Former Roman Catholic Mike Gendron published the following in his newsletter of February 1, 2016:

In his first-ever video declaring his "prayer intentions," Pope Francis called for dialogue and collaboration among those of the various world religions asserting that they are simply "seeking or meeting God in different ways." Francis contends that all the religions of the world simply represent mankind's diversity in seeking God. He says that despite the differing beliefs, everyone is a child of the same God. The pope said, "Many think differently, feel differently, seeking God or meeting God in different ways, but there is only one certainty that we have for all: we are all children of God."

Mike's following comments are from his interview with CNN: Tragically, those who do not know the Bible or who refuse to submit to it as the supreme authority for truth, will be deceived by the pope's latest pronouncement. The pope's assertion that all mankind seeks after the same God, just in different ways, is false according to the Word of God. No one seeks for (the true) God (Rom. 3:11), but there are many who seek after false gods of their own imagination or false gods of their religious traditions. The only way to meet with the true God is His way, through the one mediator between God and man, the

man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5) ... Only those who receive Jesus by believing in His name become children of God (John 1:12-13).

Actually, it is only those who have accepted Jesus and received God's Spirit are really Christian brothers (Romans 8:9). The Apostle Peter taught:

10 ... the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:10-12)

Yet, Pope Francis has an interfaith agenda that does NOT teach that one must accept Jesus in order to be saved. This is a FALSE GOSPEL! Yet, many are being taken in by it.

In an editorial for Christianity Today in late 2015, evangelical pastor Chris Castaldo argued that among Protestants and Catholics, disagreement over religious authority and salvation fades as piety trumps doctrine.

Piety trumps doctrine?

Sadly many believe that outward claims of piety trump truth. Those that believe that do not heed Jude's instructions to contend earnestly for the true faith (Jude 3). Nor the following from Jesus:

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. (John 17:17-19)

Christians are to be sanctified, meaning be SET APART for religious purposes, by the truth in the word of God. Those who compromise the word of God are not true followers of Jesus. The Pharisees of old had an outward show of piety, and instead of wanting unity with them, Jesus condemned them for it (Matthew 23:25-28).

Seventh-day Adventists Softening a Bit

As far as Sabbath-keepers go, the Seventh-day Adventists support some of the goals of the ecumenical movement, but also see that it has dangers:

Ecumenical Movement

The General Conference Executive Committee has

never voted an official statement regarding the Seventh-day Adventist relationship to the ecumenical movement as such. . . Generally, it can be said that while the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not completely condemn the ecumenical movement and its main organizational manifestation, the World Council of Churches, she has been critical of various aspects and activities. Few would wish to deny that ecumenism has had laudable aims and some positive influences. Its great goal is visible Christian unity. No Adventist can be opposed to the unity Christ Himself prayed for. The ecumenical movement has promoted kinder interchurch relations with more dialogue and less diatribe and helped remove unfounded prejudices. Through its various organizations and activities, the ecumenical movement has provided more accurate and updated information on churches, spoken for religious liberty and human rights, combated against the evils of racism, and drawn attention to socioeconomic implications of the gospel. In all this the intentions have been good and some of the fruit palatable. (Official Statement Documents. Seventh-day Adventist Church)

It should be noted that the type of unity that Jesus prayed for, will not occur until after Babylon falls (Zechariah 2:6-7) and Jesus returns (cf. Zechariah 2:10-11)--and that is something that the Seventh-Day Adventists should teach. Historically, the Seventh-Day Adventist were a bit more forceful in their resistance to the ecumenical movement than they currently seem to.

Pope hopes 2017 Reformation anniversary will encourage Christian unity

Pope Francis is planning on going to a celebration of the split from his church by Martin Luther and what became the Protestants on October 31, 2017.

In 2016, Zenit reported:

Pope Francis will travel to Sweden for a joint ecumenical commemoration of the start of the Reformation.

The news came this morning as the Holy See Press Office issued a statement about the Oct. 31 visit to the southern Swedish city of Lund, which will bring together leaders of the Lutheran World Federation and representatives of other Christian Churches. ...

During the one-day event, there will be a common worship service in Lund cathedral, which will be based on a Catholic-Lutheran "Common Prayer" liturgical guide, that was published earlier this month by the

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation.

By appearing on the celebration of the Reformation, Pope Francis is sending a strong message that Catholics and Protestants are no longer enemies.

This is clever from a worldly perspective, but not a biblical one. In May 2015, Pope Francis told Church of Sweden Archbishop Antje Jackelén that the Vatican wants further unity.

Consider that Antje Jackelén is a female and the Bishop of the Church of Sweden. If that doesn't sound off alarms, consider that she doesn't even believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. She has said that the virgin birth is a mythological term or a metaphor rather than an actual event. She endorses the theory of evolution and supports same-sex marriage in church. No real biblical church would want unity with her views on those matters.

Of course, the Bible is clear that Jesus was born of a virgin (e.g. Matthew 1:18-25), that God created all life (see Genesis 1; Exodus 20:11), and that homosexual relations are an abomination (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

Antje Jackelén, herself, is married to a man. And while the Bible does endorse that bishops get married, the Church of Rome does not endorse that. Furthermore, the Bible specifies that bishops are to be males (Titus 1:5-7).

The Bible does not endorse the ordination of women, but men. To accept females as bishops is clearly in conflict to what the Bible teaches.

Compromise is not what Jesus taught His Church to do.

Now the Lutherans, who take their name from Martin Luther, have repeatedly compromised in various areas, including several related to their political quest for ecumenical unity.

Martin Luther, himself, taught against the concept that the Roman Catholic Church was the one true church. And while most modern Protestant leaders would agree on that point, Martin Luther took this much further.

Specifically, Martin Luther taught that the Roman Catholic Church was the "great harlot of the Apocalypse" and that the Pope was the "Antichrist."

Similarly, Protestant Reformer John Calvin said this about the pope of Rome, I deny him to be the vicar of Christ. ... He is an antichrist — I deny him to be the head of the Church" (John Calvin Tracts, Volume 1, pages 219, 220).

With all the ecumenical discussions going on these days, many Protestant leaders no longer seem to believe in the papal-antichrist position of many of their early leaders.

For the record, I should say that I agree with certain Catholic leaders who have claimed that the final Antichrist will be some type of antipope. But less Protestant leaders seem to fear the papacy.

Jesus and the Apostle Paul Warned Against Improper Unity

Contrary to the views of Pope Francis and many in the ecumenical movement, Jesus DID NOT come so that the world would be united in this age. Notice what He said:

34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; 36 and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 10:34-39)

Religious leaders who profess Christ and the interfaith and ecumenical agendas clearly are overlooking what Jesus taught. He taught that His people should be willing to stand alone, even among family members.

The Apostle Paul warned about believers being yoked together with unbelievers, including idolaters:

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”

17 Therefore

“Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”

18 ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Having been raised Roman Catholic, as well as having visited many Eastern Orthodox (Catholic) churches, I can testify that their places of worship are filled with idols.

Christians are to be separate from idols. Those who accept the true God as their Father must realize that. Isaiah wrote:

11 Depart! Depart! Go out from there,
Touch no unclean thing;
Go out from the midst of her,
Be clean,
You who bear the vessels of the Lord. (Isaiah 52:11)

To depart means to separate. Isaiah’s sentiments here are also captured in the New Testament in Paul’s writing (2 Corinthians 6:17) and the Book of Revelation (18:2-4).

Scripture does not endorse the type of coming ecumenical unity that Pope Francis and various Protestant leaders endorse.

What Do Catholics Teach Will Happen to Protestants?

Many Protestants do not realize what Catholics believe and teach will happen to Protestants. They teach that Protestants are bad, and the Protestantism will eventually be eliminated.

This is also consistent with some older Catholic writings:

Father Laurence Ricci, S.J. (died 1775): ... a valiant duke will arise from the ancient German house which was humiliated by the French monarch. This great ruler will restore stolen Church property. Protestantism will cease... This duke will be the most powerful monarch on earth. At a gathering of men noted for piety and wisdom he will, with the aid of the Pope, introduce new rules, and ban the spirit of confusion. Everywhere there will be one fold and one shepherd.” (Connor, Edward. Prophecy for Today. 1984, p.37)

Frederick William Faber (died 1863): Protestantism {is} an anticipation of Antichrist... All its sects unite against the Church. (Connor, p. 88)

Werdin d’ Otrante (13th century): “The Great Monarch and the Great Pope will precede Antichrist...All the sects will vanish. The capital of the world will fall...The

Great Monarch will come and restore peace and the Pope will share in the victory.” (Connor, p. 33).

Priest P. Kramer (21st century): Pope St. Pius V teaches in his Catechism, the Roman Catechism — also known as the Catechism of the Council of Trent — that all of the Protestant religions are false religions, they’re inspired by the devil; and therefore their fruits are evil...The Protestant religions, as such, are inspired by the devil, as Pope St. Pius V teaches in his catechism. (Kramer P. The Imminent Chastisement for Not Fulfilling Our Lady’s Request. THE FATIMA CRUSADER Issue 80, Summer 2005, pp. 32-45)

So, the elimination of Protestantism is a goal. And I should, that at some point in the future that will happen.

Does the Bible Warn Against This?

Does the Bible warn about the type of Babylonian ecumenical unity that many Protestants are falling for?

Yes.

The Bible warns about a time when a leader who will have worldwide religious support. Here is something from the New Testament:

4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world...

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by

those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. 15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. (Revelation 13:4-8, 11-18)

Here is something from the Old Testament:

36 “Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. 37 He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. 38 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, with precious stones and pleasant things. 39 Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain. (Daniel 11:36-39)

The foundational steps for this are taking place now. In addition to various Protestants, and what Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople is doing, this antichrist movement is moving forward.

Now the Bible clearly warns against the Babylonian system:

2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. (Revelation 18:2-5)

That is the system that the ecumenical movement is trying to prop up.

Rome Considers Itself to Be the Mother Church

Nearly all familiar with the Book of Revelation realize that it contains the following statements:

3 And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

9 Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:3-6, 9, 18).

Even Catholic scholars admit that Rome has seven mountains/hills so that it seems to fit the description in the Book of Revelation (which they normally call the Apocalypse):

...the Apocalypse was an inexhaustible quarry where to dig for invectives that they might hurl then against the Roman hierarchy. The seven hills of Rome, the scarlet robes of the cardinals, and the unfortunate abuses of the papal court made the application easy and tempting (Van den Biesen, Christian. "Apocalypse." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. 1907).

(Note: although some Protestant scholars falsely teach that this is referring to Babylon in Iraq—this is wrong because the Iraqi Babylon is located on a flat plain and not seven hills or mountains like Rome is).

Are you aware that the Church of Rome has made

statements indicating that it is the Mother of the

World's Churches and that those groups that came out of her (like the Protestants and somewhat according to the Romans, the Orthodox) are her daughters?

The Catholics of Rome consider that they are the 'mother church,' and they want all back in their fold. This is not a new concept. Notice a decades old report:

Referring to the Anglican Church, the Pope has made the following significant statement: The Anglican Church is "a Church which she [the Roman Catholic Church] has loved so much and to which, one might say, SHE GAVE BIRTH!"

The Catholic Church "gave birth" to the Anglican Church? In the eyes of Roman Catholics, yes.

The Roman Catholic Church repeatedly speaks of herself as the "Mother" of the Protestant movement.

"The MOTHER CHURCH of Christendom lovingly invites the descendants of all the CHILDREN torn from her bosom by irrelevant issues to return to the practice of their forebears [meaning the Roman Catholic Church]..." (90 Common Questions about the Catholic Faith, by John O'Brien, p. 11). (McNair R. Why Church Unity Eludes Theologians. Plain Truth, September 1968)

Notice the following inscription, which I have personally seen on multiple trips to Rome on the outside of what, in certain respects, is the most important Cathedral for Rome:



Inscription on the Basilica of St. John Lateran

Below the inscription is translated from the Latin:

Sacred Lateran Church Mother and Head of All Churches of the City and the World

That inscription is in Latin on the Basilica of St. John Lateran which is the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome that

contains its papal throne (Cathedra Romana). This basilica is the official ecclesiastical seat of the Pope (it ranks above all other churches in the Roman Catholic Church, even above St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican).

So it is clear to all who will look that the Vatican claims to be the Mother of the World's Churches. And Babylon certainly is the Mother of the WORLD's churches. However, the Vatican is NOT the mother of the Church of God which preceded the formation of the Church of Rome and did not come from the Church of Rome (like the Protestants tend to admit they did).

Consider also:

The Dominus Iesus declaration, which has been written by a close aide of Pope John Paul II, says that the Roman Catholic church is the "mother" of all Christian denominations and that it is incorrect to refer to the Church of England and other Protestant churches as "sister" organisations on a par with Rome. (Vatican declaration provokes churches. BBC, September 5, 2000)

Perhaps I should add here that since the Church of Rome so highly condemns the beliefs of the Continuing Church of God as essentially apostate, it does not really consider itself to be its mother—which of course it is not.

Hence while the Bible is clear that there will be a false church, based out of the city of seven hills (Rome), who will somehow be a mother of abominations, the Church of Rome itself acknowledges that Rome is the city of seven hills, is the mother of worldly churches, and considers other churches to be its daughters.

Since most Protestant scholars admit that their religion sprang out of Rome, this should give them pause.

And for those Protestants who do not believe that their religion came out of the Greco-Romans, they should look into the beliefs and practices of the early faithful church and compare what they believe now to what the early true church believed. For if they do that, they will find that they have a lot more in common with the Greco-Roman religion than the true religion of Jesus Christ and His immediate followers. (Two free booklets of possibly related interest would be Continuing History of the Church of God and Where is the True Christian Church Today?)

While some may think that all of this ecumenical unity between the Greco-Roman-Protestant churches is not possible or really happening, the reality is that it is.

Consider all that one evangelical Protestant has predicted that there will be a collapse of evangelicals by 2019 because of compromise and limited biblical confidence—and that many will join the Catholics and/or Orthodox:

Michael Spencer (2009): We are on the verge—within 10 years—of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity. This breakdown will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and it will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West... Millions of Evangelicals will quit... massive majorities of Evangelicals can't articulate the Gospel with any coherence... Even in areas where Evangelicals imagine themselves strong (like the Bible Belt), we will find a great inability to pass on to our children a vital evangelical confidence in the Bible and the importance of the faith... Two of the beneficiaries will be the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions. Evangelicals have been entering these churches in recent decades and that trend will continue, with more efforts aimed at the "conversion" of Evangelicals to the Catholic and Orthodox traditions... (Spencer M. The coming evangelical collapse. The Christian Science Monitor, from the March 10, 2009 edition)

And the above is not even including the fact that those "Catholic and Orthodox communions" will themselves likely come together and change under the guise of the ecumenical movement that will strengthen in Europe—an ecumenical movement that news events show is occurring.

Since Vatican II (a major Catholic ecumenical council that ran from 1962–1965), many Catholics have been justifiably concerned that doctrinal compromise for the sake of ecumenical unity with those outside of fellowship of Rome was inevitable. And that is happening.

Even some Eastern Orthodox writers have been concerned that apparitions of "Mary" will be used as an ecumenical symbol for a false unity for Catholics, Muslims, and others that will lead people to follow the final Antichrist:

Peter Jackson (20th century): To which Mary are Muslims and Protestants being drawn?... Rome began to see her more and more as a "goddess," a fourth Hypostasis of the Trinity... Today, as heterodox Christians become more and more ecumenist and work toward creating a "One World Church," the search has begun for a Mary of universal recognition, one who will appeal not only to those who bear the name Christian, but apparently to Muslims and others as well, just as attempts are likewise being made to identify the "new Christ" with the Muslim concept of

their coming Mahdi and with the Messiah still awaited by the Jews. This, of course, will be no Christ at all but the antichrist.

This was written decades before Pope Francis became pontiff. And one of his top priorities seems to be to turn people to his version of Mary. This too, will sadly, also impact Protestants.

What is astounding is that many Protestants are turning to Rome now, even without seeing signs and lying wonders. Many more will once those signs and wonders become more prevalent as they will (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12), including, likely apparitions that people will claim to be Mary (cf. Isaiah 47; Revelation 18).

The Bible Warns Against the Expected Unity

Again, realize that Jesus did NOT come to bring worldwide unity in this age:

51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. (Luke 12:51)

The Bible shows that a false ecumenical unity will come (Revelation 13:4-8).

Notice also:

6 “Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,” says the Lord; “for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,” says the Lord. 7 “Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.” (Zechariah 2:6-7)

The Apostle Paul also taught that true unity of faith would not happen until after Jesus returns:

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:13)

Those who believe this unity comes prior to Jesus’ return are in error. We are not ‘perfect’ until after He comes (cf. 1 John 1:8). The prophesied unity of faith does not happen prior to Jesus’ return.

Also, when Jesus actually returns, He will destroy the unity of nations that are against Him (Revelation 11:15-18, 19:6,19-21).

While the true Christian faith will continue (Matthew

16:18), Protestantism, as most understand it, is doomed. Please, if you are Protestant, believe what the Bible actually teaches, turn to God, and resist the coming, more powerful, ecumenical appeals which will deceive all but the very elect (Matthew 24:24)

Consider that the Bible teaches:

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-5)

The Bible does not endorse multiple religions along with multiple ‘lords’ and baptisms. The time for true religious unity is not now—all religions would have to convert to the true Christian faith and that is not what the ecumenical/interfaith movements are all about.

As far as timing for unity, notice the following:

10 “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the Lord. 11 “Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. 12 And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. 13 Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!” (Zechariah 2:10-13)

It is only after Babylon falls (Zechariah 2:6-7) and Jesus returns that true Christian unity will occur (Zechariah 2:10-11) (note: Catholic Bibles refer to slightly different verse numbers in that chapter, Zechariah 2:10-16, but basically say the same thing).

Do not be deceived by the Babylonian ecumenical movement. The Bible warns that nearly all on the earth in the final end times will be deceived (2 Thessalonian 2:9-12) and fall for it (Revelation 13:8). Have the ‘love of the truth’ so that you will not fall for this as more and more are coming to believe that the interfaith/ecumenical movement is the key to peace.

The Bible says that Jesus is the ‘Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6) and it will take the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the millennial kingdom of God to bring peace—not the false interfaith/ecumenical movement.

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE

LESSON 9: WHY SCIENCE HASN'T “DISCOVERED” GOD



Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

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

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF!

WE LIVE in an age of SKEPTICISM—an age of doubt and disbelief! We live in an age where more and more scientists in the West are either atheists or agnostics. An age that in many countries that used to consider themselves to be “Christian,” have more and more laws contrary to the teachings in the Christian Bible.

Why are there atheists?

Here are some views on that related to Professor James Spiegel who teaches at Taylor University:

Spiegel asserts that for many atheists, it’s not “cool, rational inquiry” that led to their atheism. Rather, in many cases it’s complex moral and psychological factors that produce atheism. For example, Spiegel points to research suggesting that some prominent atheists had broken, defective relationships with their fathers. Others live in perpetual disobedience and rebellion—resisting lifestyle changes required upon adopting theism. And still others confess that they just don’t want there to be a God. Spiegel contends that immorality has cognitive consequences—it impedes one’s ability to recognize that theism is true. (Graves S. Why are there still atheists? Christianity Today. March 28, 2011).

Being an atheist is NOT the result of rational thought, but the result of misunderstanding truth, often shaped by negative experiences and/or improper reactions to other observations.

Skeptics either do not believe God exists (atheists) or are not sure God exists, but are open to the possibility (agnostics).

Skeptics dismiss the idea that the Bible is holy or supernatural in any way.

Modern education has put a premium on MATERIALISM. The mere mention of “God” in the classroom provokes LAUGHTER and RIDICULE. Immorality is often part of the curriculum!

Consider also the following headline that was in a San Luis Obispo County newspaper:

‘There is no other side to evolution’

This happened because a teacher in a local high school was disciplined for exposing some of the flaws of evolution. But many did not want to hear about flaws or alternative explanations to evolution.

Schools, in the USA at least, were supposed to teach truth and encourage independent thought. Yet, more and more, the truth is stifled for various false agendas (the homosexual agenda is another that immediately comes to mind). Forcing the teaching of evolution, while stopping scientific explanations in conflict with it is a prelude to a type of the ‘famine of the word’ which is prophesied to come (Amos 8:11-12).

Notice also the following:

The National Center for Science Education defines

dogma as “a system of beliefs that is not subject to scientific test and refutation.” When an organization claims that “evolution is as much a fact as gravity” or that people must “refrain from attacking evolution in public school” they are treating the theory of biological evolution as if it is infallible dogma that is above critique or refutation. It is not, and should not be treated as such. (Kolibush S. Evolution and creationism could be taught side by side. New Times, May 2015)

Evolution is a dogma, which is not only unproven, but has parts that are scientifically disprovable. Yet, the ‘skeptics’ tend to embrace it.

People who have seen the Ben Stein movie, Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed, realize that the academic community frequently hurts the careers of those who actually have scientific evidence against evolution.

Many in academia openly state that God is a myth. Is God an invention of an ignorant, superstitious past? This question still haunts many a mind. Let’s understand the TRUTH!

THE DEATH OF GOD?

Decades ago, various theologians and ministers, who claimed to be “Christian,” were promulgating the idea that God is DEAD—or that He simply NEVER WAS!

It’s time that “Christian Atheism” was exposed for the fraud that it is.

Why do various ones want to believe God is dead?

The answer is simple. Many do not want to admit the AUTHORITY of God over their lives. They refuse to accept the Bible as God’s authoritative revelation to mankind!

With a convenient theology where GOD NO LONGER EXISTS, obviously there would be no need to OBEY Him. Everyone can do what is right in his/her own eyes. Everyone can establish his/her OWN moral principles—set up his/her OWN “set of rules” to live by. Each person thus becomes an authority unto himself/herself! God is totally LEFT OUT of the picture!

In modern times, various theologians have decided it is fine to believe in God, but they have decided to tell many that what the Bible says is evil is good (Isaiah 5:20)—and those with itching ears that wish to engage in immoral behaviors latch on to these false teachings (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Most of the world is IGNORANT of the REALITY AND TRUE TEACHINGS OF GOD! All creation stands as a WITNESS to the existence of a great Supreme CREATOR! That Creator is ALMIGHTY GOD!

And that God INSPIRED the writing of the Bible—His Instruction Book for humankind. People do not need to remain in ignorance of God’s existence and teachings today!

WHY GOD MUST REVEAL HIMSELF

God is INVISIBLE SPIRIT (John 4:24). But humans—limited by our PHYSICAL senses and instruments—cannot DETECT spirit. Therefore, God must SPECIALLY REVEAL Himself to mortal humankind.

Because humans are aware of only the physical world around them, many have carelessly ASSUMED that spirit beings do not exist. What folly!

GOD REALLY DOES EXIST—as we are soon going to see! Actually, spirit beings have existed longer, have far superior minds, and are incomparably more powerful than man!

Indeed humans in their present form are as nothing. God says so! “All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him LESS THAN NOTHING and worthless” (Isaiah 40:17). And they would remain so if God didn’t have marvelous PLANS for mankind!

GOD CHALLENGES THE DOUBTERS!

Listen to what Almighty God says to those who DOUBT His existence:

The FOOL has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’ (Psalm 14:1).

Is God unreasonable? Does He expect you to accept and believe in that which is unprovable and unreasonable?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! God says, “Come now, and let us REASON together” (Isaiah 1:18). He WANTS us to have basic PROOFS. He exhorts us to “PROVE all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV). He knows we will not really be satisfied any other way.

The fact that God COMMANDS us to prove His existence shows that He has made ample provision to satisfy the sound and unprejudiced mind.

Yes, God has made available the MEANS by which you can KNOW HE DOES EXIST! This fact should stand SUPREME

above all other knowledge in our minds.

THE TIME TO KNOW GOD!

We are at the virtual END of an age—the 6000-year period in which God has allowed humanity to be its own master and the molder of its worldly destiny.

We're now at the very THRESHOLD of the Great Tribulation! It is to be a time such as never was before, nor shall be again (Matthew 24:21). Currently we seem to be in sorrows that precede it (Matthew 24:4-8).

Notice Mark's account of the beginning of sorrows:

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. 7 But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows (Mark 13:5-8).

There have been earthquakes in various places, weather issues, and troubles the past several years. So perhaps the sorrows are beginning (and possibly may have begun on September 19, 2009 related to ecumenical plans of certain groups that claim Jesus is He). In Mark's account the great "tribulation" does not start until verse 19 (essentially after the same events as Matthew's account lists). Economic recessions and terrorist events can be considered as "troubles."

The fact is that the coming Great Tribulation involves horrors for physical and spiritual Israel. About 2.4(?) years after it starts there are to be the heavenly signs (Matthew 24:29), which are followed by the "Day of the Lord, a time of wrath and anger (Isaiah 13:9), which affects the whole world (Matthew 24:30-31, Zechariah 14:1-4).

It's TIME WE WAKE UP to the realities that confront us! For Almighty God is soon going to intervene in world affairs by great PHYSICAL signs and wonders which humans will actually SEE and FEEL!

God is already beginning to uproot the "little world" we have created for ourselves! DISRUPTIONS on the earth are ALREADY BEGINNING TO OCCUR! And the prophesied "signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars" (Luke 21:25) will relatively SOON be seen!

GOD IS BEGINNING TO INTERVENE PERSONALLY!! Here is your opportunity to KNOW THE ETERNAL GOD BEFORE THE FULL FURY OF HIS WRATH IS UNLEASHED!

Yes, God is going to take a very definite and ACTIVE part in your life from here on out! And when men SEE and FEEL the awesome power of God in action, they will finally be convinced that GOD DOES EXIST!

WHAT ABOUT GOD?

Just WHO, or WHAT, is God? When and how did He originate? Or has He existed forever? Where is He? What does He look like? What are His surroundings like? Does God think as we do? What great powers and wonderful attributes does He possess?

What is the HOLY SPIRIT? What is God's relationship to the Holy Spirit? And what is Christ's relationship to the "Father"?

Did God create the heavens and the earth and all we see therein? Did He formulate laws by which the universe functions? Is God sustainer and ruler of all things?

And is the Bible really God's INSPIRED Word—can we DEPEND on it?

These, and many other questions, come to mind when the word "God" is mentioned. You will find the answers to all these questions in the following pages of this Study the Bible Course.

Consider that GOD IS ABOUT TO REVEAL HIMSELF in a real and TANGIBLE way that will simply astound you!

And once having revealed Himself, God will give you IRREFUTABLE PROOF that all He says in the Bible is TRUE!

This lesson, like all others, is extremely important to you. Have you PRAYED to God for understanding? If not, go to a private place, kneel down, and ask Him for SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING and wisdom. Ask God to HELP you grasp and APPLY the knowledge this lesson will reveal to you in the Bible.

Don't forget to WRITE OUT THE SCRIPTURES which answer the questions. This will help you greatly in REVIEWING and REMEMBERING what you have learned.

Now to begin the lesson itself!

LESSON 9

WHO-WHAT Is God?

Nearly all of us have been reared from childhood to ASSUME that “God” is ONE INDIVIDUAL PERSON. But your Bible reveals “God” is a kingdom, or family-composed of MORE than one divine person! Here are the facts:

1. Did “God” create the universe? Genesis 1:1. Does Genesis 1:26 reveal that God is a PLURALITY of persons? Notice the words, “GOD said, Let Us...”

COMMENT: The original Hebrew word for “God” in Genesis 1:1 and throughout the account of the creation is ELOHIM, which actually means MORE THAN ONE! It is the plural form of the Hebrew word “El,” or “Eloah,” which can be correctly translated as “Mighty One.” The plural form, as used in your Bible, means “The Mighty ONES”—MORE than just one person/being.

Elohim is a UNIPLURAL noun, such as “church,” or “family,” or “kingdom,” which stands for a SINGLE CLASS composed of TWO OR MORE individuals. Elohim, then, means the “God KINGDOM,” or “God FAMILY.”

And so “God” is not merely one person—GOD IS A FAMILY (Ephesians 3:14-15)! God is A KINGDOM—the Supreme Divine Family which CREATED and RULES the universe!

While unitarians claim that if God is one, there cannot be more than one being, this shows a terrible misunderstanding of scripture. Jesus taught that He and His Father were different, yet were one (John 17:22). Jesus also taught that in a marriage, two beings (a man and a woman) become one (Matthew 19:4-6). Hence, while the Godhead consists of more than one being (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9), there is one Godhead.

The GOSPEL JESUS BROUGHT to humankind is simply the GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD—and that Kingdom IS God. And, incredible as it may sound, Jesus taught that humans can be born into the RULING divine FAMILY of God! But more about this later.

Now let’s understand WHO are the specific individuals presently composing “Elohim”—the God Kingdom.

2. Was the “Word” with God when “God” created the universe? John 1:1. Is the Word also “God”? Same verse. Did the Word do the ACTUAL WORK of creating all things? Verse 3. And did the Word later become a flesh and blood HUMAN BEING? Verse 14.

3. Does the Bible plainly tell us Jesus Christ created ALL the material universe—including this earth and mankind? Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:16. Then does the “Word” of John 1:1 OBVIOUSLY refer to Jesus Christ? And would the OTHER member of the God Kingdom have to be the divine Person who later became known as the “Father”? 1 Corinthians 8:6.

COMMENT: John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 reveal two beginnings—that God existed and then the original creation of the universe. They both reveal that these TWO Supreme Beings of the God Kingdom, PLANNING IN PERFECT ACCORD, created all things.

The Greek word which is translated into English as “Word,” in John 1:1, is LOGOS. It literally means SPOKESMAN, or one who SPEAKS. And so everything was MADE by the SPOKESMAN, or the LOGOS, who became CHRIST!

It was the Logos of the God Family who SAID (spoke), “Let Us make man in OUR image,” thus executing His awesome office as the very EXECUTIVE of the God Family!

4. Notice who is greater in the God Kingdom. Did Jesus say He and His Father are “one”? John 10:30 and 17:11. But did He also admit that the Father is GREATER in authority than He? John 14:28. Notice also 1 Corinthians 11:3.

COMMENT: Since the Father is greater in authority and since Christ—the “Word,” or Logos (John 1:1)—made all things for the Father, then it is evident that the Father has ALWAYS been in SUPREME command in the Kingdom of God—even BEFORE the beginning of the material creation!

A “FATHER-SON” RELATIONSHIP

The Father and Christ have been shown to constitute the Kingdom, or FAMILY of God. Now we need to understand how the “Father” and “Son” relationship developed between these two Supreme Beings.

1. Did the Logos (Christ) later BECOME a flesh and blood human being? Hebrews 2:9; John 1:14. Why? Hebrews 2:9.

COMMENT: ALL mankind has sinned (Romans 3:23,). And “the wages of sin is {ETERNAL} death”! (Romans 6:23.)

The Logos became a mortal man so He could DIE to pay the death penalty for the sins of ALL mankind! For Christ’s human life was more valuable than the lives of all human beings put together because He was God INCARNATE—GOD MADE FLESH! (John 1:14.)

2. How did the Logos become a mortal man? Matthew 1:18-23. Did Jesus therefore inherit His human nature from His MORTAL mother Mary?
3. Was He BEGOTTEN of the Father by His Holy Spirit? Verse 20. Then did Jesus (the Logos) become the BEGOTTEN "Son" of God, the "Father"? And was the Father called "HEAVENLY FATHER" for this miraculous begetting? Matthew 18:19, 35.

COMMENT: Jesus was begotten within His human mother Mary. But unlike all other men, He was MIRACULOUSLY begotten of GOD by the agency and power of God's SPIRIT. He thus became the "Son" of God. He called God His "Father." And so formally began the "FATHER" and "SON" relationship which is a FAMILY relationship!

4. After His resurrection from the dead, was Christ restored to His former great power and glory as God? John 17:5; Revelation 3:21. Then will the Kingdom of God plainly be the ruling Family of God—composed at present of the Father and Son—to which the God Family is in the process of adding MANY OTHER Sons of God? Consider Romans 8:29. Notice the words, "FIRSTBORN among MANY brethren."

COMMENT: The "Father"-and-"Son" relationship of the God Kingdom clearly began when Jesus was BEGOTTEN in His mother Mary by His heavenly Father.

CHRIST – "LORD GOD" OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Did the One who later became known as the Father limit His own direct part in the affairs of this world in Old Testament times? John 1:18 and 5:37.
2. But what does the New Testament say of Christ, the "Word," who WAS taking an active part then? 1 Corinthians 10:4. Is the "Rock" one of His titles? Same verse.
3. Was this Rock called the "LORD" in Old Testament times? 2 Samuel 22:2-3.

COMMENT: In the King James Authorized Version and the New Kings James Version of the Bible, the word "LORD" is frequently used, and usually appears in small capital letters (the New Testament itself frequently does refer to God as "Lord," despite some false claims that some have made). Wherever this word appears in CAPITAL letters, it is translated from the Hebrew word "YHVH."

In written Hebrew, the vowels are omitted. They are supplied only in speaking the language. Thus the precise pronunciation of "YHVH" is not definitely known. Today it is commonly ASSUMED to be YAHVEH or YAHWEH (the true pronunciation is not known for certain as God did not choose to preserve that).

The YHVH, when more correctly translated, implies "The ETERNAL" or the EVERLIVING ONE, rather than "Lord." This Hebrew word reveals that the LORD GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE CHRIST OF OUR DAY!

4. Did David speak of this SAME Rock or LORD as his "God"? Psalm 18:1-2.

COMMENT: The word "God" actually has two meanings: the God Kingdom, or the Family of God; AND the PERSONS/ BEINGS composing that Kingdom, or Family. Christ and the Father are ONE God—one "ELOHIM"—but TWO SEPARATE PERSONS!

But the Lord—YAHVEH was the ACTIVE PARTNER of the One we now know as the Father, in GUIDING Old Testament Israel. He was "God"—the divine SPOKESMAN, or "Word" of the Godhead—in Old Testament times. And it was YAHVEH who spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden!

And so the "LORD" who SPOKE and was SEEN of men was always Jesus Christ. For NO ONE has ever directly seen the Father (John 1:18; 5:37).

5. Who did Christ tell Israel He was? Isaiah 48:17. Is the term "LORD your God" used here? This was the WORD—not the Father—who spoke. What did He tell Israel He had done, and what He would be to them in the future? Isaiah 43:15.
6. Was it ALSO the Word—Christ—who GAVE the TEN COMMANDMENTS? Exodus 20:1-2. Also read verses 3 through 17.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word for Lord in Exodus 20 is YAHVEH. So here again it was the Logos—who later became CHRIST—who was doing the ACTUAL WORK of giving the Ten Commandments, for the Father had TURNED THIS WORK OVER TO HIM!

7. Did this same "LORD God" prophesy that in the future—in the Millennium—He would ACTIVELY gather Israel out of the nations where they had been scattered? Ezekiel 11:17. And when He, as Christ the Son, has subdued all things, what will He do? 1 Corinthians 15:28.

COMMENT: The divine Person of the God Family who became the Christ was the ACTIVE "LORD GOD" in Old Testament times (in most Old Testament scriptures)– REPRESENTING and ACTING on behalf of the One who became the Father. Jesus is to remain subject to the Father!

WHERE IS GOD?

1. To whom did Christ tell us to address our prayers? Matthew 6:9. WHERE is the One whom we address? Same verse. Did Christ make a direct statement that the Father is IN HEAVEN? Matthew 7:21.
2. Is there MORE than one heaven? Genesis 2:1. Was Paul, IN VISION, taken to the "THIRD heaven" of God's throne? 2 Corinthians 12:1-2, 4. Did Christ go to the heaven of the Father's throne after His resurrection? Revelation 3:21. Is He still there? Same verse. And is the Father still there? Same verse.
3. How do we know the Father is NOT in one of the "heavens" close to this earth? John 3:13. Notice the words "no ONE."

COMMENT: The Bible clearly shows there are THREE "heavens." The first consists of the atmosphere surrounding this earth in which the clouds form. The second consists of the vast reaches of space beyond the earth's atmosphere.

The third heaven is where God's throne currently is:

4 The Lord is in His holy temple,
The Lord's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men. (Psalms 11:4)

9 The Lord has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all. (Psalms 103:19)

9... Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

What is sometimes called the 'first heaven' is the area where the atmosphere and clouds are.

23 Yet He had commanded the clouds above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
24 Had rained down manna on them to eat,
And given them of the bread of heaven. (Psalms 78:23-24)

15 In the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, (Daniel 4:15)

11... the windows of heaven were opened. 12 And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. (Genesis 7:11-12)

What is known as 'outer-space' is sometimes called the 'second heaven.' Below God tells Abram to look in the heaven where the stars are:

5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." (Genesis 15:5)

And also notice:

22 ... stars of heaven (Deuteronomy 10:22).

3 ... the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven (Deuteronomy 17:3).

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellation (Isaiah 13:10).

1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. (Revelation 9:1)

So, we can see that there are different heavens mentioned in the Bible, as well as what they are.

Today's modern jet aircraft soar high above the earth in the first heaven. And manned spacecraft have but barely penetrated the second heaven. But the Father is located far beyond the second heaven, for "no ONE" (other than Jesus) "has ascended" to God's throne in the THIRD HEAVEN!

Notice Hebrews 4:14 "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed THROUGH the heavens..." Christ passed THROUGH the visible first and second heavens to reach the heaven of God's throne–THE THIRD HEAVEN.

4. Is God associated with "Mount Zion" as well as with the "HEAVENLY Jerusalem"? Hebrews 12:22.

COMMENT: The heavenly Jerusalem and God the Father will finally come down to this earth after it is purified. Revelation 21 and 22 describe this wonderful event. A discussion of this marvelous occurrence is to be taken up in later lessons.

5. Does God dwell in a TEMPLE in heaven? Psalm 11:4. And upon what does He sit? Same verse.

COMMENT: Did you know that God's Plan is DUAL? In the third heaven exists the heavenly City of Jerusalem. Also this is the Zion where the HEAVENLY temple of the "Jerusalem above" (Galatians 4:26) is located (Hebrews 12:22).

Now in Palestine/Israel today exists the EARTHLY city of Jerusalem. And there has been, and is to be, an EARTHLY "Mount Zion"—the real temple mount of the earthly city of Jerusalem on which the millennial temple of God will stand (Micah 4:1-2).

There is some controversy associated with the actual biblical Mount Zion. Certain Hebrew scriptures, such as Psalm 48:1-2 may seem to have it towards the north of Jerusalem, while the original "Church of God" building is on a western, not northern hill (which seems more consistent with what is suggested in 1 Chronicles 11:4-8) called Mount Zion. Historically not counting possible heavenly references, there may have been three geographical locations all called Mt. Zion, if the old claimed Temple Mount area is included (cf. Pixner B. Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion. Biblical Archeology Review, May/June 1990: 16-35,60). It may also be of interest to note the true Church of God seems to collectively be referred to as being part of Mount Zion in Hebrews 12:22-23. Thus, statements about 'Zion' can have differing meanings.

The EARTHLY, temporal city and mount are plainly physical TYPES of the heavenly mount and city which are SPIRITUAL. These physical types are but a few of the many earthly REMINDERS of heavenly things so important for us to be aware of!

6. Will we be able to SEE spiritual objects when we are BORN of God—transformed at the resurrection into spirit beings? 1 John 3:2; cf. 1 Timothy 6:14-16.

WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?

Most people think it is impossible to know what God really looks like. But God HAS made it possible. And the description is contained in your Bible!

The Father and Christ will now become more REAL and PERSONAL to you than ever before! Here are the details:

1. Has any human being ever SEEN the Father? John 5:37.
2. Was Christ with the Father before He appeared on this earth as the human Jesus? John 8:38 and 6:46. Then would Christ be in a position to DESCRIBE what the Father looks like?

3. Did Christ reveal the Father to us? John 1:18. Who did Christ say the Father resembled? John 14:9. Was Christ a mortal man when He made this statement? Does the Father therefore appear like a MAN?

COMMENT: Christ clearly indicated that the Father has the general FORM and STATUE of a mortal man!

4. What did God say at creation which further verifies the fact that He has the FORM of a man? Genesis 1:26. Did He declare that the INVISIBLE things—including God—can be clearly understood by the VISIBLE CREATION—including mortal man—which God made? Romans 1:20, KJV.
5. But there is more to God's appearance than just His form. What did Christ ask the Father to do just before He was taken to be crucified? John 17:5.

COMMENT: Christ was soon going to be with the Father again. He was asking the Father to restore Him to the same GLORIFIED CONDITION which He had with the Father BEFORE He became a mortal being. He looked forward to having His former great power and GLORIFIED SPIRIT BODY restored to Him once again!

6. How do Christ's and apparently the Father's powerful, GLORIFIED spirit bodies appear? Revelation 1:13-16. Remember that the "Son of man" specifically mentioned here is Christ (Daniel 7:13-14; Mark 9:12).

COMMENT: To be "glorified" means to have GREAT POWER and GLORY! The power which the Father and Christ have IS SO GREAT that it makes their human-appearing spirit bodies SHINE AS BRIGHT AS THE SUN IN FULL STRENGTH!

HAS GOD ETERNALLY EXISTED?

In the Bible God reveals Himself as the CREATOR of all there is—this vast material universe, angelic beings, light, life (Revelation 4:11). Now since God created all these, then He certainly existed BEFORE they did. His time goes back BEFORE all of them.

"But WHO created God?" someone is certain to ask. This question does naturally enter our minds. Let's learn the simple answer from the Bible.

1. In Lesson 7, it was shown that the "Word," or LOGOS—who later became Christ—served in the office of the Father's High Priest. Christ was the One who was known as the "LORD God" by the Old Testament nations. Did He have a mother or father—did He ever have a "beginning" when He FIRST came into

existence? Hebrews 7:3; John 8:58.

2. How long has God existed? Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 90:2. Will He CONTINUE to exist forever? Same verses and Isaiah 9:7.
3. Does God promise to give ETERNAL life to the dead in Christ at the resurrection? John 5:25. Do the Father and the Son have life of themselves? Verse 26.

COMMENT: God is ETERNAL. GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN! Do you need a creator for a being that has always existed? Of course not!

In Isaiah 57:15 it states that God “inhabits eternity.” Now eternity is a difficult concept for humans to fully grasp (Ecclesiastes 3:11). While most of us seem to have no problem envisioning that we could live forever, the idea of something not having a physical beginning is totally foreign to our lives’ experiences.

Notice that God does understand this:

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

26 Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered (Job 36:26).

5 He does great things which we cannot comprehend. (Job 37:5)

8 And to God I would commit my cause—8 Who does great things, and unsearchable, Marvelous things without number (Job 5:8-9).

So we see that God put eternity in human hearts and God is infinite, but that we cannot fully understand even the work that God does from the beginning to the end. It is beyond our ability to grasp at this time. Yet the Bible reveals:

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

Thus it is clear that God knows all His works from eternity, but that there are some things that humans simply cannot fully understand.

It also seems to be able to be beyond our ability to grasp the entire universe (Jeremiah 31:32). Like God, the dimensions of the universe have no beginning and have no end. And if one concludes that empty space is the end,

where does the empty space end?

Of course, it does not.

Thus, just like no one can go to one end or the other of the universe, no one can get to the beginning or the end of the Godhead. So even though the idea of an endless universe can be within our hearts and minds, it is a concept, like the eternity of God, that is difficult for humans to fully understand.

The difficulty in understanding ETERNITY lies in our human minds. We deal in FINITE things—dollars and cents, years, miles, acres, gallons, pounds. We measure, count and estimate in units, always arriving at a DEFINITE quantity.

But eternity is WITHOUT beginning. It is WITHOUT END! Eternity cannot be limited to a definite number of years. Even as numbers can go on forever, so does God’s life into BOTH the past and the future.

Those things which have not always existed require a creator. But things which have always existed need no creator.

Because there now is existence (and we do not intend to debate this point), then something has always existed. Either God always existed or matter has always existed. If there was no God, then matter has always existed.

Matter, as much as is scientifically known (this author has a Ph.D. in one of the sciences) is composed of atoms which are composed of protons, neutrons, and electrons (no one really knows what protons, neutrons, or electrons are composed of—though some type of energy appears probable there are also quarks and other items that seem to be involved).

Electrons “orbit” the nucleus of atoms (the nuclei normally consist of protons and neutrons) at incredible speeds. They are always orbiting. As much as we humans know about energy, is that without an external source, everything will eventually run out of energy. Thus, it is not logical that matter has always existed. Also, as much as humans know about motion, it is not possible for something to start moving without being affected by something else; thus it is not logical that electrons would be in motion unless something started them to be in motion.

The fact that it appears that there seems to be substantially more matter than antimatter (which in theory would be 50-50 if a non-Divine ‘big bang’ produced the universe) also suggests that the universe was designed (some say that perhaps there is a huge amount of antimatter). If

matter/antimatter is not 50-50, then that violates a law of parity/balance in physics. So, this is another reason that physicists should consider a Divine Creator.

The fact of radioactivity also suggests that matter has not always existed. Radioactive substances are in a state of constant disintegration, thus if they would have been disintegrating forever, there would be no radioactive matter left. And science has proved that radioactive matter still exists.

To get around this point, some scientists suggest that the atomic structure of matter is reconfigured every several billion/trillion years through a hypothesis known as the oscillating universe theory: it is an interesting idea, but one that there is absolutely no proof for—as well as one that violates the known laws of physics as well as the known pattern of the universe. One of its major tenets is that as energy is exhausted from our expanding universe (hence they accept the earlier point that motion cannot continue without an external source), the gravity of the universe finally brings all matter together for a later reconfiguration (and explosion). This concept is absurd: it is like saying that after all material in an explosion stops moving that the attraction of all the material will bring it back together.

I (Dr. Thiel) used to use firecrackers as a child and can tell you this does not happen. I understand about the effects of gravity and friction, but there is no friction in outer space, thus there is nothing to slow the expansion down.

Furthermore, the Hubble telescope has proved that the rate of expansion of the universe is increasing, rather than decreasing, thus totally disproving the oscillating universe theory. Many scientists now have correctly concluded that the universe will expand. And is consistent with what the Bible teaches (Isaiah 9:7). I always felt that the oscillating universe theory violated the known laws of physics and was an attempt by some scientists to try to persuade themselves that the universe had no beginning and that there was no God.

GOD ALONE IS ETERNAL!

GOD IS SPIRIT

1. God has already shown us that He has a body (Revelation 1:13-16). But what does God say He is COMPOSED of? John 4:24.

COMMENT: Now we see one of the great DIFFERENCES between God and man. God is composed of invisible spirit.

Man is but mortal flesh and blood—composed of the earth (1 Corinthians 15:47,53).

Let's notice another great difference between God and man.

2. What is God's characteristic ATTRIBUTE? Psalm 99:9 and 1 John 4:8,16.

COMMENT: The word "holy" means PURE OF HEART or free from sin. God has pure love. God is composed of SPIRIT and has this holy attitude of love.

Is there anyone who is as Holy as God? 1 Samuel 2:2.

COMMENT: Since BOTH the Father and Christ constitute the Godhead—the Family of God—both INDIVIDUALLY have the Holy Spirit. The HOLY SPIRIT is the ONE harmonious power (Ephesians 4:4), which is shared by both Father and Son, but which is available to those that are called and who repent and are baptized.

GOD IS CREATOR AND SUSTAINER

1. Is God's Spirit also the Spirit of GREAT POWER? Genesis 1:1-3 and Jeremiah 32:17.

COMMENT: It was by the Spirit of God that God originally created and later RE-fashioned our earth, as shown in the first chapter of Genesis.

The Holy Spirit is the very POWER of God! It EXPRESSES the unified creative will of the God Family. It TRANSFORMED spirit energy from God into the material world we see about us (Hebrews 11:3).

The Holy Spirit OF God may be compared to a TOOL or MACHINE. A tool serves man in making things. The Holy Spirit serves this same purpose for God. But spirit is capable of infinite work – never running down because of dissipation or friction. And God's divine Spirit fills the universe. (Psalm 139:7; Jeremiah 23:24). How clear it is that the Holy Spirit is NOT a THIRD PERSON of the Godhead as taught by the Greco-Roman "trinity" idea! An idea that the Greco-Roman churches formally adopted in 381 A.D. at the Council of Constantinople.

Is the Holy Spirit God?

The answer to that question essentially depends upon how that is intended.

Is the spirit in man human?

Essentially since it is part of a human, it is a human spirit.

The same is essentially true of the Holy Spirit.

Since it proceeds from God, it is God's Spirit. But just like the spirit in man is not a separate person, neither is the Spirit of God a separate person.

This is why the following verses (which are the ones most frequently cited by trinitarians to supposedly prove that the Holy Spirit is God, thus a third person of their trinity) only show that sin against the Holy Spirit is a sin against God, as opposed to teaching that the Holy Spirit, itself, is a separate God being:

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. (Acts 5:1-5).

There are two main points about the above. The first is that Ananias did lie to men and the Holy Spirit. The second is that Peter and others in the Bible (Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Micah, etc.) ultimately equate all sin to being sin against God.

Perhaps it may be of interest to note that after David sinned against Uriah the Hittite, he claimed he had really sinned against God (2 Samuel 12:13). Notice also the following:

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight (Psalm 51:3-4).

Similarly, all sin is against God.

Is the Holy Spirit in Acts 5 the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Lord, or a separate person only called the Holy Spirit? Well, continuing on in Acts 5 we find the answer:

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. (Acts 5:7-10)

Notice that Peter makes it clear that both Ananias and his wife Sapphira tested "the Spirit of the Lord." This is not some separate being.

Therefore, contrary to the assertion by many trinitarian scholars, Acts 5 is not definitive proof that the Holy Spirit is a separate God or person in any trinity.

What about Acts 13:2? It states:

2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2)

While some conclude that the above must mean an audible speech, this is not necessarily the case. The Bible is clear that in the past the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets (1 Kings 14:18; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:20). Also, the word translated as "said" (εἶπε) can include concepts other than direct personal speech.

Early Christians considered the Holy Spirit as something God used, like His divine power in action. This is also reflected in symbols of the Spirit used in Scripture. The primary Hebrew word for spirit in the Old Testament is ruach, which essentially means "wind." The primary Greek word for spirit in the New Testament is pneuma, which means "wind" or "breath." Similar to wind and breath, the Holy Spirit is not of itself visible, yet it is powerful (Genesis 2:7; Luke 4:14; Acts 1:8). Also, just as the air we breathe sustains physical life, the Spirit sustains spiritual life (John 6:63).

In the 2nd century, Melito of Sardis, to cite one example, wrote that the Holy Spirit was simply the power of God as he wrote:

The tongue of the Lord-His Holy Spirit. In the Psalm: "My tongue is a pen."...

The finger of the Lord-the Holy Spirit, by whose operation the tables of the law in Exodus are said to have been written (Melito. From the Oration on Our

Since God had written the Ten Commandments Himself (Exodus 31:18), this shows that Melito only considered the Holy Spirit to be the power of God, not a separate person.

When we speak of the Holy Spirit, many cannot understand what it is because spiritual qualities and entities seem so unreal to most people. And no wonder. Spiritual things are INVISIBLE, not discerned by the physical senses. They must be REVEALED in writing in the BIBLE!

Only the Bible makes clear the nature of the Holy Spirit. Humankind is matter. God is invisible spirit. And God's Spirit, unlike mortal humans, is ETERNAL (1 Corinthians 15:53; Hebrews 9:14).

2. How did God utilize His Spirit of power to fashion His various creations? Psalm 148:5. Notice the word "commanded." Read also verses 1-4; Psalm 33:8-9 and Genesis 1:2-3.

COMMENT: Christ—the Logos, or "Word" (John 1:1)—"SPOKE AND IT WAS DONE." God said, "Let there be light"—and the Spirit of God, moving over the face of the waters PERFORMED the command, and "there was light"—INSTANTLY! The Holy Spirit is a miracle-working power!

3. What does God say to those who do not think He can create things this way? Romans 1:18-22.

COMMENT: When God originally created the earth and the heavens, NO MATTER existed. He willed that spirit ENERGY from Himself be TRANSFORMED into physical energy and matter.

But when Christ spoke, the Father could have produced the food in two ways: either by transforming spirit ENERGY into NEW bread and fish, or by transforming the ALREADY EXISTING food material into ADDITIONAL bread and fish. On another occasion, Christ was also able to still the waves of a roaring sea by the spirit energy which the Father supplied (Matthew 8:23-27).

God WILLS and SPEAKS His will, and HIS SPIRIT ACTS on any and all things He has created. All nature obeys His commands! We do not understand, and God does not reveal, the exact mechanism. But He does reveal enough of the GENERAL PROCESS. And we do have historical and scientific PROOF that all nature is obedient to Him. Christ's miracles are also PROOFS of this.

4. Does God also use His Spirit of power to SUSTAIN and RULE His vast heavenly and earthly creation?

COMMENT: God sits at the controls of the entire universe—He rules and sustains everything by the POWER of His Holy Spirit!

5. Exactly what does God sustain by His power—did He set in motion specific PHYSICAL LAWS by which the material creation functions? Genesis 8:22. Does the sun OBEY God? Job 9:7 and Psalm 104:19. How does the earth APPEAR to be suspended? Job 26:7.

COMMENT: The dictionary defines the word "sustain" as "to hold suspended, to support, to keep alive, to keep from ruin."

It has been argued that the fact that there is natural law, design, and order in the universe, this proves that there was a law giver, designer, and order maker in the universe. This is consistent with what the Bible teaches on this subject:

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).

The above shows that the Bible teaches that belief in God is logical.

Similarly 1 Corinthians notes:

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?...27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty (1:20,27).

God has designed a functioning universe and the life within it. Yet, some illogically claim to disbelieve that complicated systems require a designer.

Does anyone really think that functional laptop computers, for example, randomly have appeared anywhere in the universe, and when they did, they appeared with software on them and electricity to run them? Yet many seem to feel that life, which is so much more complicated even at the cellular level, randomly formed and it randomly came alive. This is illogical to believe, though many who consider themselves educated claim to believe it none-the-less.

Furthermore, God's creation would literally "fly apart," were it not for the LAWS He set in motion to govern its functioning. And God SUSTAINS the laws governing His creation—whether on earth or in the heavens above, whether living or lifeless—by the POWER of HIS SPIRIT!

Thus you might say the creation functions AUTOMATICALLY—much like a sophisticated computer which has been PREprogrammed to perform specific operations. God's Spirit is the ENERGIZING force which keeps the laws of the universe operating, just as electrical current energizes and operates a computer.

This little analogy points up the fact that God is a God of law and order (1 Corinthians 14:33). He CAREFULLY PLANNED and calculated His creation to operate smoothly and efficiently—according to His INEXORABLE "laws of physics"!

Notice, too, that the assignment of God's energy to the task of maintaining the physical laws of the universe is a LONG TERM assignment, in contrast to most of the SHORT TERM assignments of performing Christ's miracles.

And so God directs His Holy Spirit in attaining His purpose. It FLOWS OUT from Him and back again—much like current in an electrical circuit—and is felt EVERYWHERE in good works (Psalm 139:7-11).

ATTRIBUTES OF THE GOD FAMILY

1. Was King Solomon the wisest man who ever lived because GOD gave him wisdom? 1 Kings 3:11-12; 10:24. Then is the God Kingdom ALL-wise—the SOURCE of all true wisdom? Daniel 2:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; James 1:5.

2. Does the God Family have PERFECT knowledge? Job 37:14, 16.

COMMENT: Since the Father and Son together constitute the ONE Godhead, BOTH possess the same characteristics, or attributes. Remember, Christ said, "I and my Father are ONE" (John 10:30).

3. Does God know the SECRET of existence without dependence upon anything—needing no food, shelter or other necessities so needful for man's existence? What is He called? Isaiah 40:28.

COMMENT: He is the Everlasting God. The Hebrew word translated "LORD" here can also mean "The Self-Existent One."

4. Does God also know about ETERNAL LIFE—life WITHOUT END? John 5:26. Is He tireless? Isaiah 40:28.

5. Is there any way, on our own, by which we mortals may, OF OURSELVES, learn the secrets of God? Same verse. Also Romans 11:33 and Psalm 145:3. Does God reveal certain secrets? Daniel 2:22. To whom? Proverbs 3:32b and Psalm 25:14. Does He even reveal the FUTURE to His servants called prophets? Amos 3:7.

6. Is there any limit to God's understanding? Psalm 147:5.

COMMENT: While it sometimes seems to us that perhaps God does not understand all we go through, He really does (Romans 8:28). He has a plan for us and will see us through (Philippians 1:6).

7. And has God UNLIMITED POWER? Psalm 62:11; Matthew 19:26; 28:18. Does the fact that it was He who created our earth (Genesis 1:1) prove this? Did He also create all of the heavenly bodies—the sun, moon and stars? Psalm 8:3; 104:2. Can feeble, mortal man COUNT their number? Jeremiah 33:22. But does God KNOW their number—EVEN THEIR NAMES? Psalm 147:4.

COMMENT: Our earth is but a tiny SPECK OF DUST compared to other gigantic heavenly bodies. Take for example our sun. It is a relatively SMALL star within our "Milky Way" galaxy.

As for the NUMBER of stars in the universe, God says humans are UTTERLY INCAPABLE of counting all of them! Our Milky Way galaxy is believed to have 300 billion stars. Scientists have claimed that there are 100 BILLION GALAXIES—each with about as many stars in it as the Milky Way!

8. Can God FORETELL future events? Daniel 2:28; Isaiah 46:10. Consider Daniel 2:20-21. Then can God foretell the future because He has the POWER TO MAKE what He says come to pass? Isaiah 46:11; Matthew 19:26.

9. Does God have a perfect memory? Psalm 147:4-5; Amos 8:7; Hosea 7:2. Does He also have perfect control over His memory—can He FORGET if He so wills? Jeremiah 31:34.

10. Is God TRUTHFUL? Titus 1:2. LOVING? 1 John 4:8. JUST? Deuteronomy 32:4. MERCIFUL? Psalm 136:4.

11. Is God capable of INSTANT COMMUNICATIONS—can He know what is going on EVERYWHERE at all times? Jeremiah 23:23-24; Isaiah 58:9. What does God say He

fills? Jeremiah 23:24. How could God be everywhere at one time? Psalm 139:7-8. Can God, in heaven, even know what a person is thinking here on earth? Verse 2.

COMMENT: Mortal humans are limited by time and space. For example, radio contact between Mariner IV (which once took history-making photographs of planet Mars) and earth was limited by the fact that radio waves travel at the “slow” speed of light—186,000 miles per second. This meant that radio commands transmitted to the space probe took approximately 12 minutes traveling time to reach it as it swung past Mars—134,000,000 miles from earth! And telemetric data from Mariner IV took another 12 minutes to reach earth—a 24-MINUTE ROUND TRIP!

But because the Spirit of Almighty God is not limited by time and space, God is able to INSTANTLY KNOW what is taking place here on earth, or anywhere else in the universe! By His Spirit, God is able to even READ our very thoughts from heaven above!

12. And by His Spirit, is God able to “see” what anyone is doing from His throne in heaven—untold millions or billions of miles away? Proverbs 5:21. Does He give thought to the actions of men? Same verse and Psalm 139:2. Also notice 2 Chronicles 16:9 and Jeremiah 32:19.

13. Does God KNOW your general ATTITUDE? 1 Kings 8:39.

14. Does He HEAR the groaning of His people? Psalm 38:9. How? Romans 8:23, 26-27.

15. Does God know the number of STEPS you take? Job 14:16 and 31:4.

16. Does God know the number of HAIRS on your head? Matthew 10:30. Does He even take note of a bird when it FALLS to the ground? Matthew 10:29. Do you think these things are impossible? What does God say? Matthew 19:26. And what did Job say of God? Job 42:2.

17. Is God capable of lightning-like travel? Matthew 24:27. Then will Christ circle the earth with the SPEED OF LIGHT at His second coming so all the world can see Him? Luke 17:24.

COMMENT: At Christ’s coming, He will circle the earth with the speed of light and the righteous, who will then be made spirit, will rise to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). And actually God is not limited to the speed of light.

18. After His resurrection, did Christ explicitly forbid Mary to TOUCH Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father in heaven? John 20:17. But later that SAME DAY, did Christ allow His disciples to touch His feet? Matthew 28:9. Then did Christ travel the distance to the Father’s throne and back to earth in LESS THAN ONE DAY?

COMMENT: This account clearly shows that God is capable of traveling through space INCOMPARABLY FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT!

19. Let’s notice a few other miraculous qualities of the God Family. After Christ was resurrected and in His spirit body, did He SUDDENLY APPEAR to His disciples? John 20:19. Then is God capable of passing through solids such as doors and walls? Same verse. (Notice that the doors were SHUT!) What was their reaction? Luke 24:36-37. Did He also manifest Himself in a PHYSICAL BODY of flesh and bone that could be FELT? Verse 39. Could He eat? Verses 41-43.

20. Does the Almighty, Eternal, Creator God—who is rightly able to evaluate—consider that He is INCOMPREHENSIBLY FAR ABOVE man’s PUNY capabilities and accomplishments? Isaiah 40:17-18; 55:8-9.

Should we be thankful that God even considers us at all? Psalm 8:3-4; 92:1-3.

Just how does man, in his present form, really stand in COMPARISON to Almighty God? Daniel 4:35.

GOD IMPARTS HIS ATTRIBUTES TO US!

Incredible as it may sound, God will actually IMPART His spiritual attributes to YOU and ME!

God’s great and wonderful PURPOSE for our existence is revealed in the Bible. God’s plan is to create perfect SPIRITUAL CHARACTERS out of mortal mankind—literal BORN Sons of God’s Family!

Man’s creation in the Garden of Eden was complete only in the PHYSICAL sense. He was created a perfect physical specimen—but NOT a perfect SPIRITUAL creation! He was created WITHOUT the divine SPIRITUAL POWER which God has made available to all humankind—the power to ACCOMPLISH His purpose in us!

Here’s a glimpse of the spiritual creation God wants to produce in you. And here’s how you CAN RECEIVE the very attributes and power of God!

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

COMMENT: Notice especially the latter part of Job 14:15: “**YOU SHALL DESIRE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS.**” The “work” was **JOB**! Job knew he was merely a piece of divine **WORKMANSHIP** in the hands of the active Creator. Merely a piece of **PLIABLE CLAY** in the hands of the Master Potter! But that God had a plan for him personally. God also has a **PLAN FOR YOU**!

3. Are spirit-led Christians being fashioned by God for a **SPECIFIC** purpose? Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 2:10.

COMMENT: The word “**WE**” in New Testament language refers to spirit-directed **CHRISTIANS**. **WE**, then—if we are God’s children—are God’s **WORKMANSHIP**. Yes, we are “created”—**NOW BEING CREATED—FOR GOOD WORKS—**unto a perfect **SPIRITUAL CHARACTER** which can perform wonderful good works.

So what God is actually creating in spirit directed humans is the **SUPREME MASTERPIECE** of all His works of creation! He is in the process of creating millions—yes, **BILLIONS**—of what will become **PERFECT, SPIRIT-BORN SONS OF GOD’S FAMILY**!

4. How readily will God **GIVE** us His Holy Spirit today? Luke 11:9-13; 1 Timothy 2:3-4. But are there **PRIOR CONDITIONS** to receiving it? Acts 2:38 and 5:32. These **CONDITIONS** are **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER**!

COMMENT: God is creating His supreme masterpiece by two distinct steps: mankind, the clay material creation (Genesis 1), is only the **FIRST** phase of what is to become God’s finished **SPIRITUAL** creation. For humans, the **CLAY MODEL**, has to be fashioned and molded by **EXPERIENCE** and with the **AID** of **GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT**, into the finished **SPIRITUAL** masterpiece of all God’s creation! But before the second phase of humanity’s creation—its spiritual growth—begins, God the Father must **FIRST BEGET** us by placing His Holy Spirit **WITHIN** us. We are then **IMPREGNATED**, so to speak, by the “seed” or germ of **ETERNAL** life (1 Peter 1:23). It is the **BEGETTAL** of the life of God within our minds! We then may be compared to a newly begotten fetus in its mother’s womb which **BEGINS TO GROW**!

5. Do we become the literal “**SONS**” of God the Father when He **BEGETS** us by His Spirit? 1 John 3:1 and

Romans 8:14-17.

COMMENT: **SPIRIT-begotten** Christians literally become the **UNborn CHILDREN** of God, the Father, just as an **UNborn** human fetus is the child of its human parents.

We in the Continuing Church of God teach:

Upon receiving the Holy Spirit, Christians are begotten by God (cf. 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 5:1), then after a period of spiritual growth/gestation (cf. 2 Peter 3:18), Christians will literally be born again at the resurrection (John 3:5-7) as Christ was (Romans 1:4-5). (Statement of Beliefs of the Continuing Church of God)

6. Do we **PARTAKE OF THE DIVINE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS** of God when spiritually begotten? 2 Peter 1:3-4.
7. What are some of the **CHARACTERISTICS**, or “fruits” that are made manifest in our lives **IF** we possess God’s Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23.
8. Which is the **GREATEST** attribute or characteristic God transmits to us by His Holy Spirit? Is it “**LOVE**”? 1 Corinthians 13:13 and 1 John 4:16. Is this the **SAME** love that will enable us to “fulfill”—to **OBEY**—God’s spiritual laws? Romans 5:5; 13:10.
9. What **SPECIAL** “gifts” are bestowed by the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 12:1,4-11.

COMMENT: Just imagine! These are some of the **ADDITIONAL** spiritual abilities God gives to those who surrender their lives to Him so they may receive His Holy Spirit! God divides these special gifts among certain ones in His Church as He wills, and for **SPECIFIC** purposes.

10. Does the Father promise to raise spirit begotten Christians to immortality, just as He resurrected Jesus? Romans 8:11 and 1 Corinthians 6:14.
11. If we are begotten by God’s Spirit and grow spiritually, will we—at the resurrection—become as Jesus Christ is today? Psalm 17:15; Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2. What **TYPE** of body was Jesus changed into at His resurrection? 1 Corinthians 15:44-47.

COMMENT: If we become the spirit-begotten children of God, we will be **LIKE** Him when **BORN** of His Spirit into His divine Family! We will be given a **SPIRIT** body just like Christ’s!

The outstanding difference between the body we now have and the one we will be given is that while the one we

now have is a “natural” or MORTAL body, the one we shall receive will be a SPIRITUAL body—COMPOSED OF SPIRIT!

12. Once made spirit, will we live FOREVER? Luke 20:35-36; Revelation 22:3-5.
13. Will God GLORIFY us at the resurrection by giving us the same great POWER and GLORY of the God Family? Romans 8:17; Ephesians 3:14-16; Colossians 3:4.
14. Did Jesus give us a fleeting glimpse of this FUTURE GLORIFIED CONDITION when He was “transfigured”? Matthew 17:1-2. Notice that this was a VISION they saw concerning the future (verse 9).

COMMENT: The spiritual power and glory we shall receive at the resurrection will be SO GREAT, it will make our spirit bodies shine as the sun and make our raiment DAZZLING WHITE!

GOD’S INFINITE POWER AND GLORY WILL SOON BE OURS—IF WE HAVE HIS HOLY SPIRIT WORKING WITHIN US NOW!

God Has REVEALED Himself!

God has REVEALED Himself to you in a real and tangible way. No longer does God seem like an ethereal figment of the imagination—a mythological invention of an ignorant, superstitious past!

Through His INSPIRED Word, God told you where He resides, what He looks like, and how long He has existed. He revealed that the God Family CREATED and RULES the entire universe! You learned what part God has taken in world affairs since creation.

God also illustrated some of His awesome, but wonderful powers over His material creation. And He has even REVEALED THE GREAT PURPOSE FOR YOUR VERY EXISTENCE!

Yes, you have essentially seen God as He REALLY IS! You don’t have to GUESS any longer!

Now we need to study the IRREFUTABLE proofs of God’s existence and the veracity of His inspired Word. In the lessons which will immediately follow, God will give you these proofs in the form of tangible, MATERIAL EVIDENCE that is absolutely astounding! He wants you to be THOROUGHLY CONVINCED of His existence! He WILL LEAVE NO ROOM FOR DOUBT in the sane, fair and logical mind!

In your next lesson, you will learn that God is DAILY

bringing PROPHECIES to pass—prophecies which He uttered hundreds, even THOUSANDS, of years ago! And after that, it will also be conclusively proven that our earth could NOT have “ACCIDENTALLY happened into existence.”

These and MANY OTHER WONDERFUL AND EXCITING PROOFS of God’s existence are in store for you in coming lessons!

“THY KINGDOM COME!”



Bob Thiel and Dibar Apartian (Evian, France, 2008)

by Dibar Aparitan Originally published in the Good News magazine September 1966

Do YOU really put your heart in your prayer when you ask God daily, “Thy kingdom come”?

Do you honestly feel the urgent cry and the absolute necessity of God’s intervention in the world’s affairs—a sick world, suffering as never before? However vivid your imagination, it is doubtful that you could visualize the desperate condition the world is in— and the people’s utter misery—unless you see it with your own eyes, or associate yourself with those for whom life is nothing more than a painful existence.

I have often thought what a blessing it would be for every member of the church if he had the privilege— at least once in his lifetime—of taking a baptizing tour. For no one, after having had such an experience, could ever remain lukewarm when asking God, “Thy kingdom come.”

Last year I reported to you from the West Indies where an average family of ten shares a torn-down, dilapidated hut which serves all of its members as living room, bedroom, and kitchen. The necessity for a bathroom does not present a problem since nature graciously provides the facilities! The average islander has never known the blessings of electricity, or running water at home. He doesn’t know what it means to have a hot meal. To us who are accustomed to modern comfort, this seems inconceivable. We are used to taking things for granted.

When we hear that the FAMINE is already upon the earth, and that ... men ... don’t have enough to eat, naturally we are impressed somewhat - but not totally shaken. We

don’t feel what they feel because our stomachs are not as yet gnawing with pain. We soon forget what we have heard, and get all wrapped up in our own petty problems. As Helen Keller once said—we complain because we don’t have shoes, not realizing that there are some who don’t even have feet. . .

Europe Today

Unlike the penury which is prevalent in the West Indies, Africa and Asia, Europe today is enjoying an UNPRECEDENTED prosperity. ... Prosperity, when acquired and used in accordance with GOD’S LAWS, procures well-being and happiness; but when misused, or obtained at our neighbor’s expense, it becomes a curse. That’s precisely what’s happening today in Europe ...

Many as yet are too new in the truth to have enough faith to trust in God all the way. Rather than surrender their lives to Him, repent and be baptized, they are willing to compromise with God’s Sabbath Law, assuring themselves that God will understand. . . God, of course, does understand— but not the way they expect Him to!

But do you realize, brethren, that the same thing might soon happen—and will happen to us in this country? What would some of you do if your employer told you that, from now on, you will have your Sundays and Mondays off, but must work all day Saturday?

What would you do if you were “forced” to do so, at the risk of finding no other employment anywhere else, and seeing your children go hungry? Would you have enough faith in God? Would you beseech Him on your knees, day and night, never compromising with His laws? Or would you perhaps, just like those I couldn’t baptize in France, say, “I’m forced to work on Saturdays; I have no choice. God will understand. . .”

And what would you do if your children were required by the State to attend school half a day on God’s Sabbath—and were offered, in compensation, every Wednesday afternoon free? This, too, happens presently to be the case in France where many of our brethren face the problem. Would you consent to let the State take away your children under the pretext that you are an “unworthy parent,” unable to support your children? Think about these things.

Question yourself. Prove your heart, because you may soon have to face the same problems those in France are facing today. Would you have implicit faith in God? Will you put God first in your life— before any members of your

family- even before your very OWN life? ...

The more we counsel with people on these baptizing tours, the more we realize what James meant when he wrote, under God's inspiration, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4: 17).

There was a man in the church, in Switzerland, whom I knew very well. He understood the truth. He believed it. But he failed to grow because he yielded to his unconverted wife's arguments to compromise with God's commandments-at least on one point. "I don't care what my husband believes in or does, so long as it does not interfere with our major family plans," his wife told me a few years ago.

She would even close her eyes on her husband's not eating unclean foods, or keeping the Sabbath. But the FEAST OF TABERNACLES was something she could not accept! For nearly twenty years, she and her husband had been going on a Mediterranean cruise, every year, for a few weeks in September and October. God's Feast of Tabernacles now interfered with this family tradition! Something had to change-someone had to give in. It couldn't be she. Her husband offered alternatives, but to no avail.

Finally, in order to have "peace" at home, he, too, said to himself that God would understand if he kept the Feast in his mind only-and not in the letter! Whether he understood the depth of his disobedience or not, the fact remains that for two years he stubbornly went on cruising with his wife at the time when he should have been at the Feast of Tabernacles, in Great Britain.

Last year, a few months before the Feast, he told Mr. Wilkins, in our Geneva office, that he had all the intentions of keeping, this time, the Feast. He apparently meant it-until the moment when, once again, his wife succeeded in making him change his mind. "God will understand," the man said again, just like all those who seek to compromise with God's laws.

They don't realize that it is they-and not God-who need a better understanding! It just so happened that a few weeks before the Feast of Tabernacles, last year-a few weeks before their projected cruise!-the man was suddenly stricken and rushed to the hospital. The doctors began their experimenting and butchering. When I visited him, this summer, before undertaking our baptizing tour, I could hardly recognize him. He was still in the hospital, but he had become a mere skeleton- a human derelict. "If God ever pulls me out of this," he had previously told Mr. Bourdin, "I will not turn away from Him again. I will obey

His commandments. . ."

Sometimes it may be TOO LATE-as it was in this man's case. That last Mediterranean cruise he and his wife planned to take during the days of the Feast of Tabernacles never took place ! The man died, this summer, a few weeks after I saw him. I hope, brethren, that this will serve as a lesson to some in the church, who also look for excuses for not attending God's Feast days. You never know when it's too late for you!

"Charity" or Love?

I would like to cite one more example-a happy one-before concluding this report. A rather successful businessman, living in a small French city, had written in for baptism. When the Bourdins and I met him in his office, we were at once impressed by his eagerness to put into practice what he learned from the Bible. He was comparatively new in the truth, but zealous. He said he got up early, every morning, to listen to the broadcast and to work on his Bible Correspondence Course.

During our conversation it soon became evident that this man's biggest problem was his relationship with the other members of his family. His wife "hated" his religion. He was considered a fanatic- almost a recluse-in the view of the fact that he spent most of his time in his little office either working, studying, or praying. He could hardly find any time to spend with his children and his wife.

"We have actually nothing in common," he told us, "everything they do I dislike and everything I do they dislike. I can't stand the music they listen to, the television shows they watch, or the friends they invite over-who are hypocrites! My family in turn can't stand me, my religion, my faults and my beliefs. We're total strangers who share a home. They know, of course, that I am the head of the family, and they do what I say-not because they agree or want to, but because they know they have to obey."

"It sounds like the army life," I said, rather amused. "Soldiers, too, do what they are told to do not because they agree or want to, but because they know they have to obey."

"Right !" our man interjected. "That's exactly the way it is at home. In fact I used to be an army man myself. That's the way I have been running my home." No wonder our friend had problems!

A family is not an army. More than anything else, this man first needed to learn the fundamental principles of life. He

had to learn how to be friendly, kind, and affectionate. Actually, he had no idea whatsoever of what LOVE is.

“Love?” he asked thoughtfully. “I wouldn’t be able to define it. Love, to me, is hard work, providing for my own, obeying the orders of my superiors—including God. That’s the extent of my understanding of love.”

“Have you ever read I Corinthians 13?” I asked.

“Certainly,” he said, and he began to quote it to me by heart, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (verses 4-5).

“Fine-and now replace the word ‘charity’ by ‘love’-for that is the true meaning of the word,” I told him, “and do recite it again, please!”

He looked almost petrified. A man of authority, of power-a he-man-how could he really subject himself to such “sentimentality?”

He told me that never in his life had he known what affection was. Never had he done anything out of love-but rather out of “charity.”

He didn’t think that true “charity” and love went hand in hand. It never occurred to him that a he-man could and should express such feelings without being considered a weak person. Charity, the way the world understands it, is what he had practiced- but not love. He had never suspected that what Paul spoke of in this chapter was true LOVE, and not “charity” the way people practice it today.

“This will upset everything. I trained myself not to cry, in everything I have done, everything I have ever dreamed of in my life,” he muttered, totally disarmed. “It will mean a total change in my wife and my children. It would be pain in my mind, in my thoughts, and in my attitude, but I couldn’t cry. I wouldn’t towards my neighbors, my children, my wife.”

Had the world collapsed, he couldn’t have been more shocked. “How can I ever begin such a change?” he added.

I spent many hours with him to answer his questions, quoting Biblical examples of love, explaining to him how, with God’s help, he could undertake this seemingly impossible task. He told me that he had not cried since childhood because crying was a sign of weakness. His Dad had said a he-man never cried. So he obeyed that that order—just like a good soldier—training himself not to cry,

even when tears would have been most soothing!

“You know,” he said, “I wouldn’t how to cry. Even if I lost my wife and children, I would be in pain, but I couldn’t cry. I wouldn’t know how to go about crying!”

That evening, when the Bourdins and I returned to our hotel, we talked at length about our friend who didn’t know “how to go about crying.” He was a likeable man, who wanted so very much to change. Both the Bourdins and I prayed to God that He would intervene in this man’s life- to show him His love, and even to make him CRY a little. . .

God did intervene!

Here is an excerpt from the letter I received from our friend, just before I left Geneva for home: “I knew in my heart that God would reveal to me, through your mouth, my faults and weaknesses so that I can grow and overcome them. For weeks, I had been praying to God in this respect, asking Him to give me the right heart to put into practice what you would instruct me.

“After you left, I felt a certain discouragement in my heart, which, a few months ago, would have turned into bitterness-even hatred. But I got on my knees and prayed, asking God to help me to do what he had instructed me through your mouth. What can I say? The answer was immediate. Imagine- for the first time in my life-I, the he-man, BROKE DOWN AND CRIED ... and it felt good!

“The relations between my family and me have already greatly improved. We are now on friendly, talking terms. Words cannot express my gratitude towards God. Please do continue to pray for me so that I may grow with this newly found truth, to be a light to my own and to my friends. Please also pray that I may be ready for baptism next time one of God’s ministers visits me again. . .

Won’t you, brethren-you who are God’s begotten children-pray for such people? Won’t you pray for a little boy who refuses to eat pork and rabbit even under heavy punishment? Won’t you pray for an old woman, forlorn in a little village, who thinks school teachers ought to have bathtubs? Won’t YOU pray for a he-man, unshaken by emotions, to learn what true LOVE is and to practice it? Once you live such experiences and get to know some of the problems God’s people-as well as the rest of the world-are facing today, you can’t help but PRAY earnestly, “Thy kingdom come!”

Editor’s comments: God does understand when you compromise with His ways, so don’t. We all need to

practice love and we all need to pray also for others. We need to realize that God's intervention and kingdom is what we need and we truly need to trust Him in this life and want to be in His kingdom in the next. This is something Dibar Apartian wanted people to know.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



By Herbert W. Armstrong from the Plain Truth magazine, December 1977

Do you see a bright future ahead? For you? For humanity? Personally, I do — and if you can join me in saying that, you are one in a hundred thousand!

Where is any good news today? Where is any future to be found in nations developing nuclear weapons which can erase all human, animal and plant life from the earth? Where is any hope to be found in the wretchedness, ignorance, poverty, squalor and filth in which more than half the world's population lives?

Where is any joyous anticipation to be found in prosperous "have" nations where sources of drinking water — the rivers and lakes — are being polluted, where the air we breathe is being befouled, the soil is worn out and contaminated, and the foods are being robbed of nutrition in food factories; where homes and families are being broken up, crime is rapidly increasing, racial problems and violence are erupting, and sickness and mental disturbances multiplying?

Where is happiness today? Sixty years ago, driving along country roads in Iowa, I saw and heard farmers plowing behind teams of horses, singing happily as they walked. Today, the farmers ride tractors — but where did the singing and the happiness go?

Can we find encouraging reassurance for tomorrow on university campuses where the leaders of tomorrow are consigning morality to the limbo of an outmoded past, where suicides are on the increase, and where unproved doctrines are being absorbed by impressionable minds?

Where do we find inspiration in the assertions of world

leaders and the so-called “great,” who are warning us that we must adjust to a future of growing problems and dangers where there are NO SOLUTIONS?

Well, for those who hold the above prevailing concepts, the future must indeed appear discouragingly bleak — if they take a look at it instead of kidding themselves into assuming that by ignoring the dangers they will somehow go away.

There is a CAUSE for every effect.

There is a CAUSE for the state of the world today. And there has to be a CAUSE that will produce the peaceful and happy world tomorrow. There had to be a first cause for the very existence of matter, of life, of forces and energies. But today, it is considered “intellectual” to be willingly IGNORANT of that. I have said before, that in the first two centuries of the so-called Christian era, it was popular to embrace gnosticism — meaning, “we know.” But today, it is popular to embrace agnosticism — meaning, “we don’t know — we are ignorant.” Today, ignorance is embraced and labeled “knowledge.”

Is it IGNORANCE to recognize the facts of the great First Cause who reveals the true cause of all of today’s ills? Is it wise, intellectual and knowledgeable to be deliberately ignorant of basic facts and truth?

There are two main ways of life — two basic principles — two fundamental philosophies. One is the way of GIVING, the other of GETTING. One is LOVE, the other LUST. One believes it is more blessed to give than to receive. The other insists that acquiring, taking, accumulating, through the ways of competition, leads to progress and happiness.

The one way is God-centered, the other is SELF-centered. The one accepts the golden rule, the other says, “Do it to others before they do it to you.” The one is the way of the divine nature; the other, the way of human nature. The one is the way of humility; the other, of vanity.

This world — all civilization — this world’s society — is based on the hostile, competitive, SELF-centered way. It has produced every wail of human woe. It is the way that now threatens the extinction of humanity.

This all means one thing. Man, imbued with human nature, is utterly UNABLE to solve his problems. He can only worsen problems and create new ones. By the “knowledge” and efforts of man, this world is doomed and hopeless.

Is there, then, nothing to live for? Is there no hope for the

future? Not within the knowledge, the skills and abilities of this world’s great minds. Of self-professed “great” men, God says, “Professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools!” (Romans 1:22)

But there emphatically is a bright future ahead! The world tomorrow — which The Plain Truth proclaims — will bring world peace, universal prosperity, universal right education, universal good health.

This coming utopia does not depend on the planning or doing of men. It will be produced in spite of men.

The greatest event of all history will be the coming of the living Jesus Christ again to earth. But this time, He is not coming as the gentle young man from Nazareth, bringing the announcement that led to His flogging and death at the hands of angry men. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He went to the throne of the government of the vast universe to be GLORIFIED, and crowned as supreme RULER over the entire earth. When He returns, the world will know something of the meaning of “the power and the glory!”

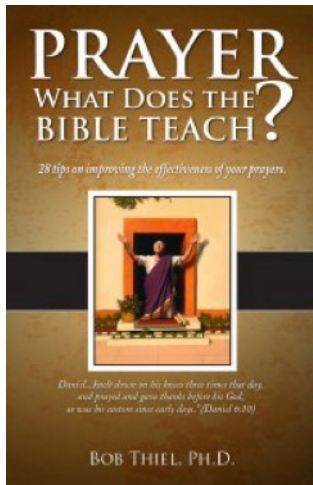
His eyes will flash like flames of fire. His face will not be pale white. It will be like the sun shining in FULL STRENGTH. He will come with all the POWER that created the universe! He is coming to crush every government of men, as if to grind them into powder! He is coming as the King of kings, ruling over ALL NATIONS.

He is coming to change human nature! He is coming to enforce the way of outgoing concern, of love, of giving, serving, sharing, helping, instead of grasping, taking and self-centeredness.

Yes, I see a very bright future — just ahead! It’s the only real GOOD NEWS in the world today!

The millennial Kingdom of God remains the only real solution for the 21st century as well.

TWENTY-EIGHT TIPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PRAYERS: PART 4



Continuing Church of God booklet on prayer

By Bob Thiel

This is the fourth part of a multi-part series on prayer.

It has been said that, “The Church of God goes forward on its knees.” This has basically been used as an admonition to tell Christians that they need to pray. But how?

In the previous articles, prayer was defined, and seventeen tips were discussed. In this article, four additional tips, starting with what we will call tip eighteen are covered.

Tip 18: Obey the New Testament About Head Coverings

Does the covering or uncovering of your head make any difference to God?

According to the Apostle Paul it does:

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. 3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. 6 For

if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man. 9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. 10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. 12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

While the above is mainly discussing hair, it also seems to be prohibiting Christian males from wearing hats or other head coverings when praying in public (though I do not believe that if a man is wearing a hat because it is cold he cannot pray) as well as allowing for women to wear veils or other head coverings when they pray. Males should have relatively short hair and not wear head coverings while praying. Women should have relatively long hair, but can (but are not required to) wear head coverings like hats or veils when praying.

Although it is true that the Levitical priesthood had head coverings, the Bible shows that there was a change of the priesthood in the New Testament (Hebrews 7:12).

It should be understood that neither Jesus nor the Apostle Paul wore head coverings when praying—and Christian males should also imitate them this way. According to The Catholic Encyclopedia, the type of head coverings that Greco-Roman religious leaders now wear did not even become formally part of their churches until after the 4th century arrival of Roman Emperor Constantine, a devotee to the sun-god Mithras.

Many religious head coverings that are worn in the 21st century are adaptations from pagan faiths.



Priest of Mithras
(3rd Century)



Pope Leo I
(Reigned 440-461)



Pope Gregory 13
(Reigned 1572-1585)

If you see any male praying with head coverings like the pagans wore, you can be assured that he does not believe he must take passages of the Bible such as those in 1 Corinthians 11 literally. But you and he should.

Additionally, the type of baldness that many Buddhist and Catholic monks have imposed on themselves, is directly contrary to statutes of the Bible (Leviticus 21:1,5; Ezekiel 44:15,20), so be careful not to imitate them.

Tip 19: Ask Often, Do Not Use Vain Repetitions, But Be Fervent

Jesus encouraged asking God for something frequently:

1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)

You need to be persistent. Many do not really have the faith they should. More information about faith can be found in our free booklet Faith for Those God has Called and Chosen.

Although we should continue to pray regularly, Jesus also warned against the use of 'vain repetition' type prayers:

7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. (Matthew 6:7-8)

Thus, while the outline of prayer Jesus gave in Matthew 6:9-13 gives us priorities and certain specifics to pray about, true Christians do not just repeat those words in rote multiple times in a row as do some faiths who profess Christ.

In some cultures, they actually spin a wheel and believe that each rotation sends up a prayer to the gods. In at least one place in Asia, I recall seeing 'prayers' that were on wheel spun by the wind. This is not what God wants.

Still others, in both Eastern and Western cultures, use a counting system involving beads to keep track of their repetitions that they strive for. But that, too, is not what God wants.

Make your petition to God clear and do not use vain repetition. Notice what God wants:

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. (James 5:16-18)

Those who use bead-counting systems for prayer are not being truly fervent nor effectual. God wants His people to "cry out to Me with their heart" (Hosea 7:14).

Notice what Jesus did:

44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:44)

Jesus was quite fervent at times as the above shows.

Tip 20: If You Are Suffering or Sick, Pray About It

God's word instructs us to pray if we are suffering or are ill:

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5:13-15)

There is a time to heal (Ecclesiastes 3:3), so pray for it. Those who are ill can also call for the elders to anoint them.

We are healed by the stripes of Jesus:

24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Moses prayed that God would heal his sister Miriam (Numbers 12:13). David prayed and fasted when others were sick:

13 But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. (Psalms 35:13)

Isaiah told Hezekiah that God would heal him:

5 'Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. (2 Kings 20:5)

God heals:

2 O Lord my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me. (Psalms 30:2)

14 Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; (Jeremiah 17:14)

Prayer is connected with healing in the Bible. When you are suffering, remember to pray.

Tip 21: Pray for Church Leaders

We are to pray for our spiritual leaders.

Notice some teachings from the Apostle Paul:

25 Brethren, pray for us (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from

unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Christians were told by Christian leaders:

18 Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. (Hebrews 13:18)

Jesus taught we are to pray for more leaders:

2 The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest (Luke 10:2).

We also are to pray:

14 The will of the Lord be done (Acts 21:14).

More information on prayer can be found in our booklet Prayer: What Does the Bible Teach?

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



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