

Is There
**LIFE AFTER
DEATH?**

by David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Where are the dead? What are they doing? Are they aware of the living? Do the dead “pass away” to heaven or hell? Do people have immortal souls? Does suicide really end it all? Will you see deceased loved ones again? Here are the Bible answers!

Is *this* life all that there is? Many religions profess to know what happens at death. Yet they do not agree. Why such confusion about the AFTERLIFE? Why such mystery—such disagreement?

This question of life after death has perplexed mankind throughout the ages. Thousands of years ago, the patriarch Job asked, “*If a man die, shall he live again?*” (Job 14:14). This question remains today.

Most professing Christians believe that they possess an immortal soul. They have been taught that the dead go to either heaven or hell. Most ministers, evangelists and religionists freely speak of “when we all get to heaven.” They declare this to be the Bible’s teaching. But is this true?

We must not assume. Jesus said, “in VAIN do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the *tradition of men*” (Mark 7:7-8). Men have their own *ideas*—their own *commandments*, their own *traditions*—invariably based on Bible assumptions. If the Bible is the Word of God, we must examine what it actually says, not what *people* say it says. Be willing to set aside cherished traditions and replace them with scripture.

Then be willing to believe God, not men.

The Moment of Death

Before answering the question “is there life *after* death?,” let’s examine what happens at the precise *moment of* death. Recall, Job asked, “shall he live

again?” What did he mean “again”? If the dead are really permanently alive anyway, how can they live AGAIN?

The Wages of Sin

If you hold a job, you receive regular paychecks. They represent wages paid to you for work done. What about God? Does He ever pay wages? Notice Romans 6:23: “For the *wages* of sin is *death*; but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here, eternal life is contrasted to DEATH—PERISHING! The wages of sin is *death*, not life. We will see that this understanding is not compatible with eternal torture in hell.

There is no mystery about the meaning of wages that an *employer* pays an employee for his work. Why should there be confusion over the meaning of wages *God* pays a sinner for his works? He pays the wicked a paycheck of *death*—not life in a place of torment. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. (Read our booklet *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* to learn more about this topic.)

Consider this! Perhaps the most familiar and often-quoted verse in the Bible is understood by almost no one. John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life.” Millions quote this verse while ignoring one of its key points.

Reread it. Notice that it exactly mirrors Romans 6:23! This time, eternal life is contrasted to PERISHING—DEATH.

The Greek word translated *perish* is *apollumi* and it means, “to *destroy* fully, to *die*, lose, perish.” There is no doubt what these words mean. “Perishable” items, such as fruits and vegetables, are those that rot—until they are “fully destroyed” or “lost.” This is not hard to understand when we are talking about anything other than a human being. Those who receive salvation are promised that they “should not *perish*” but “have *everlasting life*”! If hell is a place of eternal torture, then the people suffering there have eternal LIFE. But the verse says, “should not *perish*,” not “should not suffer eternal *life* in torment.”

How does the word *perish* relate to the popular teaching about hell? Why did God inspire John to use this word if this is not what He really intended?

Do People Have Immortal Souls?

The idea of an ever-burning hell is inseparable from the idea that all human beings have *immortal souls*. Is this what God says? Prepare to be surprised!

Most people do not understand the relationship between physical men and souls. You were probably taught in Sunday school that all human beings are born with an immortal soul. The common belief is that upon death the souls of unrepentant sinners go to hell forever.

But if the wages of sin *is* death, how is it that the Bible could also teach that people have a soul that is immortal?

Genesis 2:7 states, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man BECAME a living soul.” This verse does not say men HAVE souls. It states that they ARE souls. Adam BECAME a soul—he was not GIVEN a soul. Then, almost immediately, God warned him: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof *you* shall surely DIE” (vs. 16-17). The Hebrew word here also means “*destroy*.” When placed together, these verses plainly state that men *are* souls and souls can *die*!

The prophet Ezekiel was inspired to write (twice): “The soul that sins, it shall *die*” (18:4, 20). Death is the absence of life. It is the discontinuance—the cessation—of life. Death is not life in another place. It is not leaving “this *life*” for “another *life*”—the “next *life*.”

In addition, consider Matthew 10:28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him [God] which is *able to destroy* both *soul* and *body in hell*.” The Bible says that souls can be DESTROYED! According to this verse, they can be destroyed just as much as *bodies* can. No one doubts that all bodies eventually die. When they do, they also decompose and are completely “destroyed” due to the process of natural corruption. Any undertaker recognizes this process. This verse introduces the fact that God does the *destroying* of souls IN HELL! Bodies can die and be destroyed in many different ways. However, souls are destroyed in hell by God.

Here is what the prophet Malachi wrote about the state of the wicked who have been destroyed by God: “For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, *shall be stubble*: and the day that comes shall *burn them up*, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked; *for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 4:1-3). Obadiah 16 amplifies this with “...and they shall be as though they *had not been*.” (Read our booklet *The Truth About Hell*, to learn much more.)

The dead will be so completely “dead and gone,” it will be as though they had never existed. Surely, if they were roasting in hell forever with millions of others, and other millions “in heaven” witnessing it, this verse could hardly apply.

Are the Dead Conscious?

What about the precise moment of death? Exactly what happens?

Human minds are differentiated from animal brains by intelligent thought. Presumably, if the dead are *not* dead, but are really still alive, then they must

be capable of some kind of intelligent *thought*. They must at least be *conscious* of their surroundings. Let's consider a series of scriptures.

First, notice Psalm 146:3-4: "Put not your trust...in the son of man...his breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day *his thoughts perish*." When people die, their thoughts end immediately—"in that very day." That is what your Bible says.

This verse is also not compatible with the idea that the dead are either alive in heaven or consciously suffering in a place of torment. We could suppose that, if they were enjoying salvation, they would certainly *know* that they were! We could also suppose that if they were suffering, they would *know* that they were. Could the tormented somehow be unaware that they were suffering?

Ask yourself: What would be the point of their suffering, or of their enjoyment of salvation, if they could not *know* of it? Death (actually life) in hell would have to be as though they were in a coma—completely unaware of what is going on around them—while their sensory nervous system is feeling the excruciatingly painful sensation of burning. How would this work?

Use the following analogy. Before someone undergoes major surgery, he is anesthetized—rendered *unconscious*—so he will *not* experience pain. Medical doctors understand this—why don't theologians and religionists? Why do they deny the plain statements of the Bible?

Some willingly ignore the message of scripture. They allege that only "mortal" thoughts perish, in the sense that the dead leave this earthly realm and experience some mysterious, different, new kind of "thought." Of course, this is ridiculous, and the Bible does not say it, but we ought to at least examine the idea. Let's now consider an even more direct verse.

Notice Ecclesiastes 9:5: "For the living know that they shall die: *but the dead know not anything...*" An honest reader cannot misunderstand this!

Solomon also recorded, "For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: *as the one dies, so dies the other*; yes, they have all one breath; so that *a man has no preeminence above a beast...*All go unto one place; *all* are of the dust, and *all* turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:19-20).

Now consider Psalm 115:17: "The dead praise not the LORD, neither *any* that go down *into silence*." Death means "silence." This certainly does not agree with the popular concepts of millions of the dead wailing and screaming in agony—or immediately receiving eternal life in heaven or anywhere else with millions of others supposedly conversing, singing, playing harps and praising God. Neither scene could possibly be described as SILENCE!

Psalm 6:5 further explains that the dead do not experience conscious memory: "For in death there is *no remembrance of You*: in the grave who shall give You thanks?" Could anyone seriously suggest that the dead, suffering in hell, could experience the normal range of human memories, *but not be aware of God*—not be able to "remember" Him? Would God put people in "hell" and then leave them there to suffer, forever wondering how it was that they got

there—who it was that put them there—because they have no “remembrance” of anything related to God?

Applying the same question to those who received salvation is even more ridiculous. Could people “roll around heaven all day” and be *unaware* that they were in the presence of God or of even who He was?

No! When people die, they are DEAD!

So far we have not explained *everything* about life after death, but we know that further *life* does not immediately occur *at death!* We have established that when a person dies, he is dead! But then what happens?

The Resurrection of the Dead

Remember to always let the Bible interpret the Bible. Keeping the truths that it contains simple allows the hollow ideas of men to fall like a house of cards.

Here is why the dead have no knowledge or remembrance of God.

Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *ALL* that are *in the graves* shall hear His voice, and *shall come forth*; they that have done good, unto the *resurrection* of life; and they that have done evil, unto the *resurrection* of damnation [Greek: *judgment*]” (John 5:28-29).

Christ understood that most would find this astonishing. That is why He told the disciples to “*marvel not* at this”—He understood that most people *would* marvel at the thought that everyone who has ever lived is now “in the grave,” awaiting a resurrection! You should not marvel at the words of Christ either. *Accept them!* He said that “all” are in the grave, not “some.”

There are no conscious thoughts and no remembrance of God after death because everyone who has ever died will be resurrected, either to eternal life or to judgment. This is what God’s Word says.

No wonder David said, “As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, *when I AWAKE*, with Your likeness” (Psa. 17:15). He understood that a resurrection was an awakening back to life.

Job also looked forward to being resurrected. Notice the verses surrounding his earlier-referenced question: “O that you would *hide me in the grave*, that you would keep me *secret*, until your *wrath* be past [God’s *coming* “indignation” and “wrath” against certain nations], that you would appoint me a set time, and *remember me!* If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*, till my *change* come. You shall call, and I will answer You” (14:13-15).

Job did not ask that God would only hide his *body* in the grave. He asked God to “hide *me*...keep *me*...appoint *me*...remember *me*.” He also recognized that God would keep him “secret.” Ask yourself how this fits with being in heaven or hell. If so, God would be pretty poor at keeping secrets and the rest of the verse would make no sense.

Now look at Job’s question—“if a man die, shall he *live again?*” If Job was going to still be alive at death, how could he “live *again?*” Job knew that he

would be “waiting...in the grave” for his resurrection at an “appointed time,” when he would be “changed.”

But what did it mean that he would be *changed*?

Paul also wrote of the “change” that awaits all true Christians. Carefully examine I Corinthians 15:51-52, 54: “Behold, I show you *a mystery*; we shall not all *sleep*, but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump...the dead shall be raised...and this *mortal shall have put on immortality*, *THEN* [not yet] shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *DEATH is swallowed up* in victory.” It is certainly an almost complete mystery to the world that there is coming an awakening and a change at the resurrection.

We must also ask, how can one go from “mortal” to “immortal” if he *already has an immortal soul*? This idea is also a mystery—but, unlike the mysteries of God, it is one of the “mysteries” devised by men that cannot be understood or solved, because it makes no sense.

Do you see the silly logic of men when they ignore plain scriptures?

Just as Job understood that he would be “changed,” and David understood that he would “awake,” Paul understood that Christians will be “changed”—will awaken from “sleep”—once the resurrection has come. At the resurrection, people will literally awaken *from death*.

Ask yourself: How can people be resurrected if they are already alive as immortal souls? Only the dead, like Christ from the tomb, need to be resurrected. That is the purpose of a resurrection. Do not be fooled by deceivers who say, “The resurrection only applies to the body, since the soul has remained alive”! You have already seen numerous scriptures disproving that fallacy.

Upon the most basic examination, the ideas of intelligent men are often exposed as outright foolishness. Men invented the popular concept of hell as a means of scaring people into following the false religions that they have created. The true God would never roast people for all eternity—not allowing them to burn up, to mercifully end their suffering. This is what a *monster* would do. But then, humanly-devised, fictional gods will “do” and “teach” whatever their creators have decided for them.

Billions have lived and died without ever knowing the name of Jesus Christ and without ever having had an opportunity for salvation. If the unsaved, upon death, go directly to *hell*, then over half the people who have ever lived are still alive *there*!

Since no human has ever returned from the dead to offer a firsthand report, we must either choose to believe the ideas of men or search the scriptures for what God reveals about this subject.

Several Resurrections

Remember that “all that are in the grave” will eventually be resurrected. Actually, this refers to a resurrection to take place near the end of God’s Plan

of working with mankind. About one thousand years prior to this time, another resurrection will occur. Revelation 20 elaborates on both these resurrections. Verse 4 explains that after the earlier one, the saints shall reign on Earth with Christ for 1,000 years after Satan has been bound (vs. 1-2). Verse 5 then explains that the “rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were *finished*.”

At the end of the 1,000 years will come the resurrection to which Jesus referred. This will include billions of people, from the time of Adam, who never had an opportunity to know the truth. The world has been cut off from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Now continue in Revelation 20: “And I saw a *great white throne*, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw *the dead*, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged...according to their works” (vs. 11-12).

This period is referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment, during which all human beings will have opportunity to learn the truth. God will “put [His] Spirit in [them].” Most will grow, overcome and qualify to receive salvation and join all those who preceded them in the prior resurrection.

The book of Ezekiel points to yet *another* resurrection. It contains a fascinating chapter describing, in vision, a valley of dry bones. Nearly every Sunday school child sings about the bones described in this vision, yet with no understanding. Take time to read the 37th chapter in its entirety. It depicts the millions who have been part of the physical nation of ancient and modern Israel (all 12 tribes, not just the Jews) being given the opportunity for the spiritual salvation that God never offered them in the Old Testament.

Verse 11 describes them as “without hope.” Ezekiel was instructed to speak to this vast pile of disconnected dry bones. Notice: “Thus says...GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (vs. 12). Here, millions are described as being resurrected from their “graves.” It is obvious that the resurrection that this is describing is *physical*, back to a flesh-and-blood existence.

Ezekiel continued to speak to the bones: “Thus says the Lord GOD unto these bones...I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live” (vs. 5-6). Verses 13-14 add, “And you *shall* know [not yet] that I am the LORD, when I have *opened your graves*, O My people, and brought you up *out of your graves*. And shall *put My Spirit in you*, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land...”

When will Israel *know* what has happened? Once they are resurrected! Similar to the resurrection of millions in Revelation 20, only then will Israel “know” that God has taken them from the grave.

On a side note, I have counseled several people who were considering suicide. All who are tempted to take this easy way out, thinking that it will end all

their suffering and sorrows, should consider the following: When people die, they do not know anything. There is no awareness of the passing of time. In effect, they will reawaken *immediately*—having no awareness of the passing of time—and find that they still have all of their old troubles, and have *added* to themselves the guilt of self-murder! Suicide, then, does not make things better. It makes them much worse!

The Resurrection Chapter

I Corinthians 15 has been called the “Resurrection Chapter.” We have already quoted it, but let’s further examine this chapter. It details more about the subject of resurrections.

Verse 26 states, “The last ENEMY that shall be destroyed is *death*.” At funerals, worldly ministers often depict death as “an old friend” one meets at the end of “life’s highway.” Haven’t you often heard this or a similar phrase? The Bible calls death an ENEMY!—there is nothing “friendly” about enemies!

Verses 22-23 state, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall ALL be *made alive* [through a resurrection]. But *every man* in his *own order*...” Note two points. First, *every* person will have a chance for salvation. Second, each person’s opportunity will come “in his own order.” We have seen that all parts of God’s plan are not fulfilled in *one* resurrection.

Verse 23 continues into 24: “Christ the *firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ’s *at His Coming*. Then comes the end...” Christ was the beginning—“the firstfruits”—of a coming resurrection, which will include all saints. But, “then comes the end” references the rest of God’s wonderful Master Plan, which will continue as the Kingdom of God is established on Earth at Christ’s Return.

That time lies just ahead.

Christ’s Gospel—An Advance Announcement

Like a newscaster far ahead of his time, Christ came announcing a complete change in the way the world would one day be governed. With this change would come unprecedented world peace, happiness and prosperity.

Everywhere Christ went, He spoke of the Kingdom of God. It was central to most of His parables. When He commissioned His twelve apostles and sent them to preach, His only instruction was to preach about the Kingdom (Luke 9:1-2). When He later sent out His seventy disciples (Luke 10:1), He also commanded them to preach the Kingdom of God (vs. 9). Paul preached this same “kingdom of God” message everywhere he went (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

Wherever He went, Jesus announced, “Repent you, and *believe* the GOSPEL” (Mark 1:15). But just what *is* the true gospel? The truth of the gospel has remained hidden to the vast majority of professing Christians. Ever since the first century there has been a conspiracy to deceive would-be Christians about the meaning of the gospel. Shocking as it is, this statement is true.

Most believe that the gospel is about the PERSON of Jesus. Certainly, Jesus *is* an important subject, but He is *not* the gospel. The Bible shows that Jesus Christ is preached in conjunction *with* the gospel.

Some proclaim a “gospel of salvation” or “gospel of grace.” Others believe a “gospel of miracles” or a “social gospel” or a “gospel of foods” or of “healing” or “faith.” There are also those who merely think of “gospel *music*” when they hear “*gospel*.” These are all manmade ideas and not what the BIBLE says!

Notice Mark’s account again! “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*” (1:14). *That* is the gospel Jesus preached. In this context, He had said, “Repent you, and *believe the gospel*.” What gospel? The “KINGDOM OF GOD.” Verse one references this when it says, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Christ’s gospel was about the KINGDOM OF GOD—not something else! One must believe *that* gospel to be saved—not a counterfeit or substitute.

The truth of this subject is so vital that God inspired Paul to powerfully warn all who would pervert the gospel: “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert* the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach *any other gospel* unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be *accursed*. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach *any other gospel* unto you than that you have received, let him be *accursed*” (Gal. 1:6-9).

This is a strong statement! In the next chapter (2:5), Paul went on to stress the hope “that the *truth* of the gospel might continue with you.” So since there is the *true* gospel, all others must be *false*! This scripture also reveals that Paul never taught a different or additional gospel, as some allege.

Christ’s disciples asked Him what the sign of His Coming and the end of the age would be (Matt. 24:3). He warned of deception from the many who would come “in His Name,” saying “Christ was Christ” (vs. 5). He explained that an emphasis would be made on His PERSON instead of the MESSAGE He brought. Nine verses later, He prophesied, “this gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then* shall the end come” (vs. 14).

We are NOW in the time of the end and The Restored Church of God is preaching *this* gospel. Impostors and false leaders suppressed the true gospel until the 20th century. Starting in 1934, Herbert W. Armstrong began teaching the true gospel with power. It continues today—and is scheduled to grow *much* bigger in scope and volume.

Message About Government

The terms *kingdom* and *Kingdom of God* are found scores of times throughout the New Testament. Yet, it is absolutely astonishing how nearly everyone has

lost the knowledge of what it is! The whole world lies in ignorance about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

The word “gospel” is an old English word meaning “god spell” or *good news*. The word “kingdom” is also an old English term, simply meaning *government*. In other words, Christ preached “the *good news* of the *government* of God.” The coming of world peace, happiness and abundance *will* certainly be good news for a world that has not known these things for 6,000 years.

Prior to Jesus’ birth, an angel appeared to His mother, Mary. These verses describe this encounter and what she was told: “...the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto...Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, you that are highly favored...You shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the *throne of His father David*: And He shall *reign* over the house of Jacob *forever*; and of His KINGDOM there shall be no end” (Luke 1:26-33).

In John 18:36-37, Jesus stated, “My *kingdom* is not of this world.” He was standing before Pilate on trial for His life, and Pilate asked Him, “Are you a king then?” Christ responded, “You say that I am a king. *To this end was I born*, and for this cause came I into the world.” Christ was born to be a KING!

Here is what was prophesied in Isaiah about Christ: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the GOVERNMENT shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His GOVERNMENT and peace there shall be no end, upon the *throne of David*, and upon *His kingdom*, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isa. 9:6-7). When Christ establishes God’s government on Earth, it will then soon bring *permanent peace* to every nation!

Entering the Kingdom

The Bible teaches that God’s Kingdom rules *over* the people and nations of the Earth. The nations are no more part of the Kingdom than the average citizen of any country is part of the government that rules over him. One must ENTER the Kingdom to be in it. As distinct from those who are governed by it, we must ask, who is actually *in* the Kingdom?

Recall that Paul stated, “Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom* of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a *mystery*...” (I Cor. 15:50-51). Certainly, as previously mentioned, this is a mystery to almost everyone—that flesh-and-blood human beings cannot enter the Kingdom of God—that it is *only* at the resurrection that all true Christians are changed (born again) from flesh to spirit. We will see that it is at this time—and only at this time—that begotten Christians are “born

again.” If we are to just believe the plain truth of the Bible, *those inheriting the Kingdom of God cannot include flesh-and-blood people!*

Many counterfeits have supplanted the proper understanding of what the Kingdom of God is. (Read our booklet *What Is the Kingdom of God?* to understand this most central subject in all the Bible.)

An account in John 3 is commonly misunderstood by people who believe that they can be “born again” in this life (while they are still flesh and blood) and, therefore, “see” the Kingdom of God in this life (vs. 3).

In this account, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, approached Christ and acknowledged in verse 2, “Rabbi, *we know* that you are a teacher *come from God.*” He plainly admitted he knew who Christ was and who (God) had sent Him to Earth. Notice that Nicodemus spoke for more than himself when he stated, “*we know.*” He was referring to himself and the other Pharisees who recognized who and what Jesus Christ was. These leaders could not deny the power of God evident in the miracles Jesus was performing.

The religious leaders, the Pharisees, well understood that He was a “teacher come from God” with the truth. Yet, they still called Him a blasphemer, drunkard, heretic, seditionist, bastard, ignorant, demon-possessed, false prophet, friend of publicans and sinners, etc.—and crucified Him!

Christ told Nicodemus, “Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God” (vs. 3). He was explaining that only by the process of being born again can one actually “see” the Kingdom. So, there is a *limitation* on who can see it. Anyone can see *physical* things. This is not true of the Kingdom of God. Grasp these critical points that Christ made.

In verse 5, Christ says that unless one is “*born of water and of the Spirit,*” he “cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God.” Yes, the Kingdom is something that can be “entered into”—but verse 6 explains Christ’s “born of water and of the Spirit” phrase. It states, “That which is born of the flesh IS flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit IS spirit.” Flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God—but *spirit can!* Because Christ wanted to allow no room for misunderstanding, He likened spirit to wind.

Wind, like spirit, is *invisible*. It cannot be seen. Christ told Nicodemus, “The *wind* blows where it lists [does], and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is BORN OF THE SPIRIT” (vs. 8). Those born of spirit will be like wind—they will be *INVISIBLE!*

But *when* does this change from physical to spirit composition occur?

I Corinthians 15:49 states, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we *shall* [in the future—at this resurrection] also bear the image of the heavenly.” Verse 53 states, “For this corruptible [flesh is certainly corruptible] must put on incorruption [those born of God are spirit], and this mortal must put on immortality.” It is at this point that flesh is changed into spirit.

Genesis 2:7 states, “And the LORD God formed man of the *dust of the ground.*” Even converted human beings are still composed of flesh—of the dust of the ground. God will change their flesh to spirit at the resurrection.

All those who enter the Kingdom of God must be made of—*composed of*—SPIRIT!

Let's examine this further. Matthew 22:30 states, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *but are as the angels of God.*" Hebrews 1:7 shows that angels are made of spirit. This is important to understand about our composition in the resurrection. But do not misunderstand and think that Christ was saying that the resurrected saints would actually *be* angels. He merely meant that they would be "as" the angels, in that neither angels nor saints marry.

Life or Death?

Your human existence is literally a matter of life or death. Jesus said, "...I am come that they might have LIFE, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Yet, Paul wrote, "all have *sinned*" (Rom. 3:23) and "the wages of *sin* is DEATH" (Rom. 6:23). We have seen that human beings do not have immortal souls. Remember, they *are* souls (Gen. 2:7).

Man is not naturally headed toward eternal life. He is headed toward DEATH! Human beings live approximately 70-80 years (and in some parts of the world much less). A few manage to live longer than this, but eventually all die (Heb. 9:27). Yet this was never God's original purpose. His supreme PURPOSE is for all people to have eternal life (II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4).

God intends that *all* people ultimately receive His Holy Spirit. He wants it to eventually enter *all* minds. Notice what Paul wrote: "The [Holy] Spirit itself bears witness *with* our spirit [spirit in man], that we are the children of God: And if *children*, then heirs; *heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Christ...that we may be also glorified together*" (Rom. 8:16-17). Two spirits are described here. God's Spirit works "with" the human spirit (not an immortal soul) to bring people to salvation as "joint-heirs with Christ." (Read our booklet *What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind* to understand more about the difference between the spirit in man and the Spirit of God.)

True Conversion Revealed

Romans 8:6 states, "For to be carnally [physically] minded is DEATH; but to be *spiritually minded* is LIFE and PEACE." Anyone who has received the Spirit of God ultimately has life inherent within him. This means he has the *potential* of becoming an "inheritor" with Christ. This is absolutely remarkable understanding—unknown to all but the scattered few on Earth today!

Most people have been deluded into believing that they are Christians merely because they have "accepted Jesus" or "made a decision for Christ" or "given their heart to the Lord"—or some other similar profession of belief. They have been deceived into believing that if they join a church or pronounce themselves "born again," this makes them Christians. How utterly false and contrary to the plain words of the Bible!

Then what *is* the Bible definition of a Christian? Here is what Paul wrote: “For as many as are *led by the Spirit* of God, they are the *Sons of God*” (Rom. 8:14). A Christian is one LED BY the Spirit of God!

Receiving God’s Spirit occurs in the following way. Upon repentance and baptism, one is placed into the Body of Christ, which is the Church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Hence, the scripture says, “By one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] are we all baptized into one body” (I Cor. 12:13).

The Bible states that the entire world is now awaiting the resurrection when flesh is changed to spirit. It is then that the Sons of God will be revealed. Carefully notice: “For the *earnest expectation* of the creature [creation] waits for the manifestation of the *sons of God*...Because the creature [creation] itself also shall be *delivered* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the *children of God*. For we know that the *whole creation* groans and travails in pain together until now” (Rom 8:19, 21-22). This verse shows that the creation awaits the “delivery” of the “Sons of God.” It is “groaning” and “travailing” (laboring) toward this delivery—this BIRTH—of the begotten Sons of God, born again at the resurrection and Christ’s Return.

What Will You Be Like When Born Again?

In Genesis 1:26, God said that He made human beings in His “image” and “likeness.” This verse means what it says. God created you to become “like” Him in every way. Through His Spirit entering the mind of each of His newly converted children, a new spirit life is begotten. A tiny new spirit-begotten embryo comes into existence. Just as little children grow up to look like their physical parents, so also do the children of God slowly take on the SPIRITUAL likeness of God (their Parent), in “divine” nature (II Pet. 1:4) and holy, righteous character.

Both the Old and New Testaments make this point absolutely plain! Has anyone ever pointed out the following scriptures to you? While many have a vague notion that Christians are “sons of God,” few realize: “Beloved, *now* are we the *sons of God*, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be LIKE Him; for we shall *see Him as He is*” (I John 3:2). We will have the very likeness of Jesus Christ. Remember that Romans 8:16 said that we are “children” of God *with* Christ.

David also understood this 1,000 years earlier, recording, “As for me, I will *behold Your face* in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I *awake*, with Your LIKENESS” (Psa. 17:15). (This verse debunks the popular “beatific vision” delusion that people cannot actually see God’s face in the afterlife.) David understood that he *would* see the face of God. So did John. Both realized that, at the resurrection—when we “awake”—we would be exactly *like* God, in form and character. So then, God is reproducing Himself in those who have His Spirit. *He is creating children that will look and be just like Himself!*

Several scriptures reveal what Christ looks like now. His face shines like the sun, His feet glow like burnished brass and His eyes literally blaze like flames of fire (Matt. 17:2; Rev. 1:14-16; 19:12-13).

Further, Paul revealed our awesome human potential when he wrote, “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change *our vile body*, that it may be FASHIONED LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

What a glorious future to look forward to!

The Spirit of God in us will allow us to awake in the resurrection. Notice Romans 8:11: “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead *dwelt in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead *shall also quicken your mortal bodies* BY His Spirit that dwells in you” (also I Cor. 15 and I Thes. 4:13-18). After fulfilling His task of overcoming sin and becoming mankind’s Savior, Christ was *raised* to return to His position with the Father.

Now, understand this point! It is the same Spirit, dwelling in us from the moment of conversion that will resurrect us (all those begotten of God) to be with Him in His Kingdom.

Like the newly begotten fetus grows in its mother’s womb toward birth as a baby, the Christian must also grow before he can leave the womb. Peter wrote, “But GROW in *grace*, and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 3:18). Christians are to grow in this lifetime. In order to be given divine authority and power, as joint-heirs with Christ, they must qualify, through the building of God’s holy, righteous character.

The Church Feeds Her Children

Jesus said, “I will build My Church” (Matt. 16:18). It is called “Jerusalem above”—“the *mother* of us all” (Gal. 4:26). Hebrews 12:22-23 makes this clear: “But you are come unto...the *heavenly Jerusalem...the* general assembly and *church...which* are written in heaven.” It does not say that the Church is *in* heaven, but rather that those of the Church are “*written* in heaven.” This is because the dead in Christ are now awaiting the resurrection.

Like any good mother, the Church nurtures and feeds her children. She has been doing this for 2,000 years. Peter instructed the ministry to “*feed the flock of God* which is among you, taking the oversight...willingly” (I Pet. 5:2). Paul made the Church’s role as Mother even clearer: “For the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto...the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

Two additional verses demonstrate that God’s “children,” like any other children, are supposed to “grow up.” Notice that the Church is also responsible for protecting God’s flock from false doctrine: “That we henceforth BE NO

MORE CHILDREN, tossed to and fro, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive*; but speaking the *truth* in love, may GROW UP into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (vs. 14-15).

It is the ministry’s duty to teach the Church the truth and to warn of the dangers of being deceived by false doctrine. (Read our book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* to learn how to identify Christ’s Church.)

So, the begotten child of God grows in the womb of its mother—the Church—like any other child grows during the nine-month gestation period. While in the womb of the Church, all begotten sons are fed the necessary spiritual nutrients in order to grow sufficiently to be born into the Kingdom as incorruptible Spirit Beings.

Christians must develop and mature spiritually while in the womb. Human fetuses begin at microscopic size and grow to the time of birth. The newly begotten Christian grows in the same way. He starts out 99.9% spiritually *immature* and slowly progresses to spiritual maturity—and BIRTH!

Christ the Firstborn—Among Many

When speaking of Christ, Romans 1:3-4 states: “Concerning *His Son* Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the *Son of God* with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead.*”

Most have heard that Jesus was the Son of God, but He was only “declared to be” the Son of God, in the fullest sense, “by the resurrection from the dead.” Of course, He was already the *begotten* Son of God prior to His birth into the Kingdom at the time of His Resurrection.

This scripture shows that Christ was *physically born* of Mary, descending from David “according to the flesh,” and *spiritually born* a Son of God “according to the Spirit...by the resurrection of the dead.”

By returning to Romans 8, we can better understand *why*. Notice this about Christ’s birth: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the **FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN**” (vs. 29).

Christ is merely the first “born again” Son of God. “Many brethren” (the majority of those with God’s Spirit for 6,000 years) will join Him at His Return. This absolutely astonishing understanding is known to only the few called today (John 6:44, 65).

An Astonishing Scripture

Let’s consider an amazing series of verses. Paul quoted David, from Psalm 8:4-6, when he asked the all-important question: “*What is man, that you are*

mindful of him?” (Heb. 2:7). Since God is eternal, and sits over the entire universe and has all power under His control, it is no wonder David asked this question.

The astounding answer is in the same verse: “You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, *and did set him over the works of Your Hands.*” God intends to share rulership of His entire creation with His Sons. Again, Christ is merely the first of many Sons.

The birth of a firstborn son does not preclude the arrival of additional sons (or daughters) to the same family. I have two sons and am a firstborn son with a younger brother. My father was second born, having an elder brother.

Paul explains that God plans to give great *power and authority* to His Sons: “You have put ALL THINGS in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see *not yet* all things put under him” (vs. 8). This has not *yet* happened, but soon will—following the Return of Christ.

Now notice: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God *should taste death for every man.* For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing *MANY SONS UNTO GLORY,* to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Verses 9 to 10 reveal the staggering potential planned for all Christians. The begotten child of God has been called to “glory” and to be one of “many sons.” Christ’s suffering and sacrifice allow Him to be the “Captain of *their* salvation”—and potentially *yours.*

What an incredible future for those whom Christ “calls...brethren.”

Finally, notice: “For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is *not ashamed to call them brethren*” (vs. 11).

This verse shows Christians are “sanctified” (set apart). *How?* Christ stated, “Sanctify them [begotten Christians] *through Your truth: YOUR WORD IS TRUTH*” (John 17:17). The cherished traditions and fables of men, about life after death or anything else, are worthless. A Christian is sanctified by the TRUTH!

If Christ is “not ashamed to call them (us) brethren,” then we, God’s begotten sons, must not be ashamed to defend the very truth that sanctifies us. We must “grow up” unto Christ (Eph. 4:13) holding only to the true doctrines of God. We must QUALIFY to one day stand beside Christ over “all things.”

Saints Rule with Christ

Matthew 24:27 states that when Christ returns, His Coming will be like lightning shining from the east to the west. It will be an earth-shattering event no one could miss.

But will He come to rule the Earth by Himself—or will there be others with Him? When He establishes His world-ruling government, will others be part of

the ruling structure? If men's governments require the efforts of many people assisting a supreme leader, could God's government be different?

The prophet Daniel spoke of Christ coming in the "clouds of heaven" (7:13). Before His Return, God officially grants Him the authority to rule the world.

The next verse (14) states, "*And there was GIVEN Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*"

Again, we ask, will Christ rule alone, or will others rule with Him? Exactly how does God intend to *manage* all of the peoples and nations on Earth?

Several more verses in Daniel 7 are critical to understand. Now notice verse 18: "But *the saints* of the Most High shall *take the kingdom*, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever."

That is right! The ultimate calling of true Christians is to join with Christ to share rulership in the Kingdom of God. Truly, Christ is "KING of kings and LORD of lords." That can be you or anyone else who is willing to accept God's terms for entry into the Kingdom of God.

Verse 27 further confirms the marvelous potential lying ahead for the true saints of God: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, *shall be given to the people of the saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

What could be plainer? No wonder Christ stated, "And he that OVERCOMES, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*: And he shall *rule them* with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father" (Rev. 2:26-27). A few verses later, He added, "To him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne...*" (3:21).

The phrase "in My throne" is used because Christ understood that His throne, unlike the Father's in heaven, is on Earth. Luke 1:32 also shows that for a time, Christ will sit on the Throne of David, obviously on Earth, prior to a resurrected David sitting there himself. Also see Revelation 5:10; 20:4; Matthew 5:5; Psalm 25:12-13 and 37:11. There is no doubt that when Christ returns, the saints rule with Him!

But it is the Christian's responsibility today to QUALIFY in order to be part of God's coming Kingdom. Will that include you?

There Is Life After Death

Herbert W. Armstrong concluded his booklet *Life After Death?* with the following summary, under the subhead "Ruling With Christ":

"[He] that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron..." (Rev. 2:26-27). But how and from where shall we rule?

“Jesus said, again, ‘To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne [at Jerusalem], even as I also overcame, and am [now] set down with My Father in His throne’ (Rev. 3:21).

“When BORN of God, we shall BE spirit, no longer human flesh and blood. We shall be given POWER!

“As Daniel revealed, the saints then shall take the kingdoms of earth’s nations and rule them for the first thousand years—establishing WORLD PEACE and divine government under Christ.

“And after that? The passage in Hebrews 2 shows that then, again under Christ, we shall be given power to rule over the entire vast universe—literally all things. For that is the power that has been given to Christ and will be ours as joint inheritors with Him!

“Yes, there is a LIFE AFTER DEATH for those obedient to God—a SPIRIT life of incredible potential beyond our wildest dreams! Can we humans grasp the awesome portent of these astounding truths? Attaining immortal life should be our all-encompassing goal. For that is the gift and desire of our merciful Father and His Son Jesus Christ.”

The following literature expands on topics discussed in this booklet:

- Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!
- Bible Authority...Can It Be *Proven*?
- The Truth About Hell
- What Is the Kingdom of God?
- What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind

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