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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

Should the True Church of God be Headquartered in Jerusalem?

Some have said so. What does the Bible teach?

**Did the Old Testament
Teach the
Kingdom of God?**

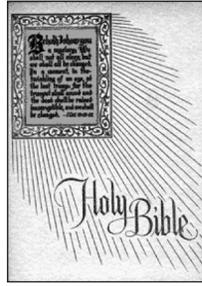
**YOU May NOT
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Tribulation!**



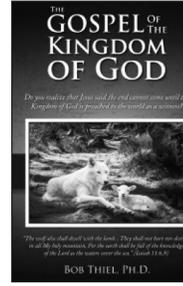
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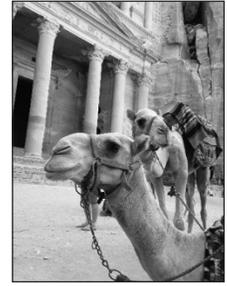
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About the Front Cover: Cover photograph taken by Dr. Bob Thiel of a side view of Jerusalem.

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SHOULD THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD BE HEADQUARTERED IN JERUSALEM?

Does the Church of God need to be headquartered in Jerusalem?

Is being based out of Jerusalem something that the New Testament teaches should be the case during the church age?

Some have claimed so.

But what does the Bible teach?

In the 20th and 21st Centuries

In the 20th century, the late Church of God Seventh Day (CG7) leader, A.N. Dugger, began what he called the 'back to Jerusalem movement.' He essentially claimed that Jerusalem was God's city and that this is where the true Church of God should be based.

He went to Jerusalem and established an office there.

But the reality is that the Jerusalem office did precious little other than to stamp ordination certificates and other documents with a stamp that said it was certified in Jerusalem.

In 2015, I spoke to former CG7 president Robert Coulter about this. Coulter is also CG7-Denver's church historian and put out a book on CG7 history a few years ago. Basically, he stated that A.N. Dugger never really had anything of significance in Jerusalem, but that he had used the Jerusalem office to pretend he was doing something of importance there.

But in the 21st century, we have seen something similar.

Notice the following from a group calling itself the Jerusalem 7th Day Church of God (bolding added):

The Jerusalem World Headquarters has representatives laboring in establishing this true faith in about every country of the world,

where many congregations have been raised up, and many evangelists are laboring.

Calls come in to Jerusalem World Headquarters for Jewish ministers, and they are being sent to different countries. In 1970, Elder A.M. Shoemaker was sent in answer to a call from Kenya, Africa. In about two months labor there he baptized 284 converts and ordained sixteen men called to the ministry and receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Jerusalem Messenger, which was published at Jerusalem, gives many reports and photographs of groups and workers over the world who love Jerusalem. Psalm 128:5, 6. There are a number of other groups of this same faith with some slight non-essential doctrinal differences in various places carrying on a good work and printing various publications from their national headquarters. We believe they are all gathering fruit for the kingdom, and the foundation creed of all of these groups is the same, viz., Revelation 12:17, —the commandments of Elohim and the testimonies of Yahshua (Christ).

One of these headquarters is Denver, Colorado; another, Meridian, Idaho, and some that make the sacred Hebrew names of the Father and the Son, a special part of their message (Proverbs 30:4; Psalm 68:4, and 91:14, also 69:35, 36, and Isaiah 52:6) are located at Junction City, Oregon, and Jackson Gap, Alabama, also The Faith of Holt, Michigan.

We believe these will all fall in line with the Holy Scriptures and publicly affirm that Jerusalem was chosen of the Father and must be recognized as the World Headquarters by all of the remnant people holding to the New Testament name, and the true faith once delivered to the saints, as they are led further by the Holy Spirit. <http://jsd-cog.org/a-brief-history/02/8/17>

So, has the Father actually chosen Jerusalem to be the main office for the Church of God in this age through the Holy Scriptures as the above claims?

No.

Firstly, let me point out that Revelation 12:17 points to a separation of Christians in the end times, and says nothing about Jerusalem. Plus, the Church in Denver does NOT consider that this Jerusalem-based group is part of them—and I confirmed this with the President of the Church of God Seventh Day (Denver) group, Loren Stacey, on December 21, 2017. Nor is the Jerusalem group part of the Meridian-referenced church (which I confirmed with their President Roger Boone on December 21, 2017). The Jerusalem group seems to be acknowledging headquarters that do not consider themselves related, plus the Jerusalem group’s emphasis on ‘sacred name’ differs from that of those I have spoken with are part of the Denver or the Meridian groups. Neither of those groups endorses a requirement for sacred names nor intends to be part of this Jerusalem group. Actually, the people I had spoken with at those churches had not even heard of the Jerusalem 7th Day Church of God.

Secondly, the Bible shows that Jerusalem was NOT chosen by the Father for this time to lead His most faithful work.

Thirdly, the original Church of God building in Jerusalem is not under Church of God control. The Jews have it, and the Roman Catholics want it. For a time, the Muslims also had it.

Here is a photograph some of that building I took when I



was in Jerusalem a few years ago:

No Church of God controls this building. A photograph of some of the original bricks of this building is on the front cover of the Bible Hymnal of the Continuing Church of God. We are a continuation of the original Christian church in Jerusalem, that later moved its headquarters to Antioch, then Asia Minor, then eventually to Europe, and later to the Western Hemisphere.

This does not mean that there is no place for Jerusalem, but the Bible does NOT teach that it needs to be the headquarters for the Philadelphian portion of the Church of God.

Fourthly, Jesus made it clear that Christians would have to go over many cities of Israel before He returns (cf. Matthew 10:23) and He never specified that they needed to be headquartered in Jerusalem in the end.

Fifthly, the Apostle John, believed to be the last of the original apostles to die, was leading the Christian church from Ephesus, not Jerusalem. John did not teach or indicate that Jerusalem was to be the headquarters. Also, when Jesus had him pen the last book of the Bible, there were letters to seven churches in Asia Minor: none were addressed to Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Apostle John’s successor, Polycarp, led the faithful from Smyrna, not Jerusalem.

Sixthly, as far as Jerusalem goes, once it ceased having Jewish bishops in 135 A.D., it ceased to have Church of God leaders for much time (Gibbon E. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume I, Chapter XV, Section I. ca. 1776-1788; Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter V, Verses 2,3.& Book IV, Chapter 5, Verses 2-4, pp. 45, 71; Pines S. The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Volume II, No.13; 1966. Jerusalem, pp. 14-15).

Church of God Christians were NOT allowed in Jerusalem after 135 A.D. According to Irenaeus in the late second century, Jerusalem then ceased to “bring forth fruit” (Adversus haereses, Book IV, Chapter IV, Verse 1).

Seventhly, though some real Christians came back, under Emperors Constantine and Theodosius, the Church of God was forced out of Jerusalem. Emperor Constantine imposed the death penalty on Christians in Jerusalem who would not eat pork (Pines S. The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source), whereas Theodosius decreed the death penalty on Christians who kept Passover on the biblical 14th of Nisan date (Gibbon E. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume III, Chapter XXVII).

Jerusalem was not a permanent church headquarters for the true Church of God during the Church age as church history clearly proves.

Having visited Jerusalem, let me say that for reasons of freedom of religious speech, technology, and fulfilling

Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20, being based in a country like the USA makes more sense at this time.

The Holy Scriptures

But what about the Holy Scriptures?

The Bible teaches:

10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. **14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.** (Hebrews 13:10-14)

This scripture proves that no city was to continue to be the 'headquarters city' for Christians. Commentators, like Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown further point out that this was also a specific reference to Jerusalem.

Jesus taught:

23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes (Matthew 10:23).

Persecutions came to Christians in Jerusalem and they fled. The above scripture says nothing about returning back to cities fled from.

Jesus' word in Matthew 10:23 are consistent with what happened in early Church history. Christians fled Jerusalem to Pella around A.D. 67. And while some Christians returned until A.D. 135, the reality is that history records that the Apostles Philip and John went to Asia Minor.

Notice something else from scripture:

28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Since apostles are first in God's hierarchy of human leaders, and since the Apostle John outlived the other apostles and lived in Asia Minor, this should clearly demonstrate that he did not believe the false doctrine

that the true Church of God needed to be based out of Jerusalem. Nor did any who accepted his apostolate.

Some who claim Jerusalem should be the city for the Church of God in this age point to Isaiah 2:3 as supposed proof, but let us look at it in context:

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

The above is clearly a reference to the millennial time. You can see that because this is for the 'latter days,' plus the fact that the judging in verse 4 has not taken place, nor have any who claimed this verse effectively gotten the word of the Lord to go forth from Jerusalem.

No scripture supports that prior to the millennium, the Christian church needs to be based in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, notice some prophecies from Zechariah:

16 'Therefore thus says the Lord:

"I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it," says the Lord of hosts, "And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem." 17 "Again proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The Lord will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem."'" (Zechariah 1:16-17)

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)

Those prophecies show that the time will come when God will *again* choose Jerusalem—but they also show that He has not done so for NOW!

As alluded to before, consider that the Bible teaches that there will be the seven church eras ranging from Ephesus to Laodicea. ALL of the seven churches were located in Asia Minor, and the ones shown to be around at the end do not say anything about being in Jerusalem. If Jesus wanted His church now headquartered in Jerusalem, He would have had that inspired—and the passage in Isaiah 2 clearly does not do that.

While I do believe that some Christians will be in Jerusalem prior to fleeing to the wilderness (Revelation 12:14-17; Matthew 24:16-17), there is no statement in the Bible showing that the Church of God will be based in Jerusalem in this age.

The Fruits Matter, Location Not Really

No group that has made that claim that the true Church of God needs to be in Jerusalem has actually fulfilled the rest of Isaiah 2 regarding getting the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem in any meaningful way.

Jesus taught that you would know them by their fruits (Matthew 7)—and the ‘fruits’ of the Jerusalem advocates have not been sufficiently Philadelphian. While they have given out religious tracts, few understand much about the gospel of the Kingdom of God and are NOT working to fulfill Matthew 24:14.

I know that various ones are of the opinion that Jerusalem must be the headquarters, but the reality is that is not what the Bible shows.

Consider that the Bible also teaches:

14 Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity. (Proverbs 28:14)

We in Continuing Church of God (CCOG) do not wish to be offensive but have seen many who claim to want to be Philadelphian Christians who will latch on to one or more points and harden their hearts, and not truly support the end-time Philadelphian work. They claim to be reverent to the word of God, but like the Pharisees of old, prefer their traditions and explanations over what the Bible really teaches.

We in CCOG are leading what I have termed the final phase of the work.

It is the highly dedicated in the real Philadelphian remnant of the Church of God that will finish the final phase of the work before (Matthew 24:14; Daniel 11:32-33) and during (Revelation 11:3-14) the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord.

These are also the ones mentioned in Revelation 12:14-16. Those who will not do so, and are real Christians, are part of the rest of her seed mentioned in Revelation 12:17.

While that does not preclude spending time in Jerusalem (and I expect to personally spend time there again), it is wrong to say that the most faithful church must be based out of Jerusalem now.

Those that wish to be ‘Philadelphian Christians’ (Revelation 3:7-13) have usually realized this.

Holy Scripture does not support that claim that the true Church needs to be based out of Jerusalem.

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE



LESSON 13: WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S INHERITANCE?

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.

You were born into a world which has developed a certain type of civilization. The instant you were born you knew NOTHING! But your eyes opened, you looked about, and knowledge of what you saw began registering in your

memory – began putting knowledge into your mind. Your ears heard sounds, and thus additional knowledge entered through the sense of hearing. Very elementary at first, but gradually, each bit of new knowledge, entering your mind through your sense of taste, smell, feel, sight and hearing, was ADDED to what had previously been stored there.

Gradually you came to know, and take up with, the customs, ways, generally accepted ideas and beliefs of this world. You accepted them, took them for granted without question.

Some of them were good – but many of them were BAD. But you took them for granted without realizing they were bad.

The Bible teaches:

29 Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

Humans were made upright, but under the influence of Satan the devil and their own lusts (cf. James 1:14), they do not always live uprightly (Romans 3:10).

You were born with a NATURE. We often call it human nature. Few people realize what it is. Human nature has a spiritual side, and a physical side.

On its spiritual side, especially with Satan's influence, it often tends towards VANITY. Vanity loves and tends to exalt the SELF. It can be SELF-centered. It tends to be selfish and greedy.

On its physical side, there are the five acknowledged senses (plus others, like sense of temperature), and the PULL of the senses is to want to be satisfied. Exercise of these senses can produce sensations of pleasure and/or satisfaction. Some of these sensual pleasures are healthy, uplifting, necessary (like the sense of thirst), and GOOD. But the pull of some can be injurious, harmful and BAD. Thus, human nature exerts an automatic, impulsive PULL toward selfishness, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, hatred, and toward the lusts (WRONG desires) of the flesh.

Human nature makes it come NATURAL, especially with Satan's influence, to resent and resist authority over one. A child tends to resist the authority of his parents. We grow up with a natural attitude of hostility toward authority, all the way up to GOD.

Human nature wants to BE considered good. It just

doesn't want to DO good if it perceives some type of real or imagined harm.

Real GOOD is the WAY of God's invisible, inexorable, spiritual LAW. That LAW is, simply, LOVE. It is love toward God in the form of trusting and willing OBEDIENCE to God's every command and direction, knowing it is for our highest good. It is love toward God in the form of being GOD-centered – having the mind CONTINUALLY (consciously or sub-consciously) in contact with God, RELYING on God, seeking guidance from God, worshipful in the sense of gratitude, obedience, faith in complete trust. It is love toward fellow HUMAN – in the sense of outgoing concern, EQUAL TO love and concern for self.

Now NO HUMAN exercises THAT KIND of love NATURALLY. YOU simply were not born with that kind of love—but with the ability to one day get it.

You DON'T HAVE IT NOW!

That is, not unless you have received it from God through His GIFT of His Holy Spirit.

THAT LOVE travels a certain road. It is the road that leads to peace, to happiness, to confident assurance, security, well-being, ENJOYMENT without kickbacks, prosperity – every good thing the heart desires.

Everyone wants that RESULT.

That is to say, everyone wants to have the benefits of being good.

But no one, it seems, NATURALLY wants to GO that way – to truly DO good.

Yet, that is the WAY of God's Law.

Now this world is NOT FULL of happiness, peace, joy, and universal prosperity. It is pretty well filled with strife – in the home, in business, in politics, in war between nations. It is pretty well filled with unhappiness, frustration, insecurity. It is pretty well filled with crime and violence, with broken homes and unhappy quarrelling homes, with sickness and disease, with frustrations, failures, tragedies.

However, GOD is NOT the author of all these troubles in the world.

God has, FOR A GREAT PURPOSE, made humans free moral agents, and allotted six thousand years for humankind to MAKE A CHOICE – whether to accept God's government over humans, to be ruled by God's

Law of LOVE – or whether to set up their own ideas of human government, following what comes NATURALLY – HUMAN NATURE.

That six thousand years is about up. When it is – apparently within a decade or so— God Almighty is going to intervene supernaturally and with divine POWER in the governments and ways of society – and BRING PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO HUMANITY!

HOW can that be done?

It's simple!

There is A WAY of personal, group, and organized living that will automatically produce that utopia. And there is A WAY that HAS, for 6,000 years, produced curses, war, strife and violence, frustration, failure of everything this world has.

God is simply going to enforce, with divine Power, HIS WAY. He is going to take over all governments, in a super WORLD GOVERNMENT, ruled by the very CREATOR. It will rule by GOD'S LAWS – the WAY of love!

Why do some people in the West – even college professors and some who are intellectually inclined – become Communists? Because they see many things WRONG in this world – they want to BE right – they grasp Communism as a last straw and only hope, under the delusion that THEY CAN HAVE A PART IN MAKING THIS A BETTER WORLD! They want to BE right – but they don't want to DO right God's way. So, they grasp the straw that makes the lying and false PROMISES of producing the solution. But Communism is only another IDEA OF MAN BASED ON HUMAN NATURE. It is one of many false hopes.

But YOU can HAVE A PART in actually bringing PEACE, happiness, joy and abundance to humanity. God Almighty is GOING TO DO IT – whether or not you have a part in it! But He is not going to do it alone. He is going to take certain human beings, born in the very LIKENESS of God, who REPENT of their carnal human nature, who cry out to God to CHANGE that nature, and GIVE them the matchless supreme GIFT of His divine LOVE that will travel THE WAY toward peace, happiness and joy.

These are they who, through real repentance of what they ARE as well as what they have done, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as well as in His resurrected LIFE and POWER, are forgiven their guilty past, given contact with God, CHANGED, CONVERTED, receiving HIS HOLY SPIRIT, being begotten as HIS CHILDREN, receiving

the DIVINE nature.

In other words, they REPENT of human nature – they REPENT of hostility to authority – of resentment against God’s Law. They SURRENDER unconditionally to GOD, and wholeheartedly WANT Him to rule in their lives. They CHANGE (through God’s power given by His grace) from rebellion to submission – from SELF-centeredness to being GOD-centered. They let Jesus Christ (in Spirit) come into their lives and actually live their lives for them (Galatians 2:20).

They change from THE WAY that has brought all the curses upon this unhappy world, to THE WAY that will bring a brilliant, joyous UTOPIA to earth in a very few years when God sends the LIVING Jesus Christ in all Power and Glory to RULE ALL NATIONS and bring the happy, peaceful WORLD TOMORROW!

This CHANGE is conversion. This is what it means to BECOME a Christian. A Christian is NOT merely one who PROFESSES Christ. God’s own instruction to us – the Bible says that if one has not received God’s Holy Spirit, he is not His – he is NOT a Christian (Romans 8:9). God gives His Holy Spirit ONLY to them that OBEY Him (Acts 5:32). This implants within the mind the DIVINE NATURE – it means a CHANGED MIND!

But it does NOT remove the HUMAN nature. The MIND governs whether the converted Christian now FOLLOWS the pulls, the impulses, the desires of human nature, or whether he resists them and is LED BY the newly received divine nature. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14). But one’s HUMAN nature cries out to be satisfied – does not like to be repressed.

Just RECEIVING God’s Spirit is not enough. One must BE LED by God’s Spirit. His Spirit opens the mind to UNDERSTANDING of spiritual truth, and the KNOWLEDGE of God’s Law. It opens the mind to THE WAY one should follow. God’s Spirit also is the love of God – God’s own divine love flooding into the human heart and flowing on out in love to God and love to neighbour (Matthew 22:37-40; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22).

One must therefore GROW in spiritual knowledge and in God’s grace (2 Peter 3:18). He must become a DOER of God’s Law – actually LIVING in THE WAY of peace and happiness and joy. This means one must OVERCOME one’s own carnal nature, one’s old habits, the temptations of the world – ONE MUST BE CHANGED! One must develop

toward perfect spiritual and righteous CHARACTER. The real Christian is undergoing a life of TRAINING to become a RULER in God’s Kingdom – in the happy and peaceful KINGDOM OF GOD.

One cannot learn everything in a minute, a day, or a year. One does not become perfect at one jump. It is a continuous PROCESS. No Christian becomes perfect at the very beginning. One does not overcome or root out all the sins, the wrong habits, all at once. One must do it little by little. But, “he who overcomes, and keeps MY WORKS until the end,” says Jesus Christ, “to him I will give power over THE NATIONS—HE SHALL RULE THEM” (Revelation 2:26-27).

WHY do THE NATIONS of this earth need to be ruled by Christ and those trained under a Christian life? Because all the unhappiness – everything WRONG with this world – has come from living THE WAY of human nature – THE WAY of hostility to God’s Law and GOD’S Government. Because the only way this world can have PEACE, PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS, is to be forced to build a society based on THE WAY that PRODUCES these desired blessings.

If you have started on THAT RIGHT WAY, don’t get discouraged because you have slipped and fallen down along the road a few times. Get up and KEEP GOING. Even if you have sinned and are truly sorry, you can repent, and Christ is your High Priest to forgive. Read and study 1 John 1:7-10 and 2:1-2. This is written to converted CHRISTIANS.

At the time of Christ’s coming, the dead in Christ will be resurrected and rise to meet the descending Christ in the air. At that instant those LIVING who have been thus CHANGED, begotten by God’s Spirit, will be changed in composition, from mortal to immortal – from matter to spirit – from human to divine.

THEY are then to RULE with and under the all-powerful living Christ, until ALL NATIONS beat their swords into plowshares, and PEACE shines forth on this war-weary earth!

Jesus Christ taught His followers to PRAY: “YOUR KINGDOM COME – YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH!” (Matthew 6:10). How about it? Shall we pray that prayer?

I DO!

IS HEAVEN PROMISED TO THE SAVED?

WHERE will the “saved” spend eternity? Do you REALLY know? Of course, in most religions that claim Christianity, you will have probably HEARD that you’ll go to heaven, if you are “saved”, and most have probably just accepted it WITHOUT QUESTION.

But did you ever stop to PROVE it for yourself? Did you ever look into the BIBLE TO SEE whether it REALLY does say Christians will go to heaven?

It’s time we learned what Almighty God – the FINAL AUTHORITY – reveals about the Christian’s promised inheritance! Let’s begin to UNDERSTAND the astounding truth from your Bible!

God Makes a Promise

There is a PROMISE in your Bible which tells WHAT the saved shall inherit for eternity – and WHERE they will be! That promise was made to all Christians. Yet the promise of this place was not made DIRECTLY to Christians. It was made to ABRAHAM, from whom Christ – as an HEIR of Abraham – descended!

As soon as one becomes a Christian – as soon as he is truly Christ’s – he becomes a co-heir WITH CHRIST of this promise (Romans 8:17). Therefore, the promise which was made to Abraham and his heir, Christ, also applies to every Christian.

While addressing Gentile converts, God says through Paul, in Galatians 3:16, 29, “Now to ABRAHAM and his SEED [Christ] were the promises made ... And if YOU are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed [children], and HEIRS according to the promise.”

Do you COMPREHEND what that means? Let’s understand! “If you are Christ’s” – that is, if you are TRULY CHRISTIANS – then you are ABRAHAM’S CHILDREN – you are accounted by God spiritually as children of Abraham – and are now “HEIRS according to the PROMISE” – YOU are now an HEIR, a beneficiary – you will receive the FULFILLMENT of the SAME PROMISE that God made to Abraham!

Notice that the Christian is NOT YET a possessor of his inheritance – a Christian is NOW an HEIR – and what

a Christian will inherit (possess) if saved, is the SAME INHERITANCE promised to Abraham. Whatever shall be the inheritance of the saved is a definite, SPECIFIC PROMISE of God which was made to the ISRAELITE forefather, Abraham.

Abraham is referred to in the Bible as the “FATHER” of the FAITHFUL (Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:7, 9, KJV). Abraham is the father of all those who are FULL OF FAITH! If one is converted, whether he be Jew or Gentile – regardless of race or color or sex – if one is Christ’s, then he becomes one of Abraham’s children, and an HEIR of the PROMISE made to Abraham. The converted Christian is to INHERIT what was PROMISED to Abraham.

If you’ll look into your Bible to find out what God promised to Abraham – to find out WHAT is the inheritance of those who are saved – to find out WHY we have to be Abraham’s children to inherit this promise – WHEN and HOW we shall inherit the promise -- YOU’RE IN FOR A SHOCKING SURPRISE!

There is no other question more IMPORTANT in your life – this matter concerns YOUR ETERNITY – and yet you probably never thought to really look into it for yourself – IN YOUR OWN BIBLE!

The statement we read from the Book of Galatians actually sums up the WHOLE of the Gospel – it is a condensed statement of the very PURPOSE and PLAN of God for mankind! Your hope of ETERNAL LIFE – of salvation – depends altogether on what is stated in that greatly misunderstood passage!

Christ Confirmed the PROMISE

In order to understand this important question, notice what is written in Romans 15:8, KJV: “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to CONFIRM the PROMISES made unto the fathers.”

In bringing a NEW MESSAGE – the GOSPEL – Jesus came to confirm the promises made to the fathers.

But WHO were the FATHERS? – an WHAT are the PROMISES made to them? – heaven? – purgatory?

The inspired words of Peter relate that “The God of ABRAHAM, and of ISAAC, and of JACOB, the God of OUR FATHERS, hath glorified His Son Jesus” (Acts 3:13, KJV).

The fathers, then, were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If you are Christ's – if you are a CHRISTIAN – YOU are an heir to inherit – not what men might devise in their imaginations – you are an heir ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE!

If you're an heir, you are going to INHERIT something. If you're an heir according to the promise, you are going to INHERIT WHATEVER WAS PROMISED TO THE FATHERS – not something else.

That promise to Abraham is IMPORTANT! Whatever it is -- THAT IS what you shall inherit – if you are saved! You find the account of that PROMISE MADE TO ABRAHAM in the Book of Genesis.

Abraham OBEYED

Now notice the 12th chapter of the Book of Genesis, verse 1: Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family And from your father's house, To a LAND that I will show you."

We find that God called Abram – as his name was originally – out of the land of Babylon where he lived – surely symbolic of the spiritual "Babylon" in which we live today – just as, today, God calls you and me out of THIS world – THIS BABYLON!

Abraham didn't quibble or argue. Verse 4 says: "So Abram DEPARTED." He went to a CERTAIN LAND, where God led him – the land we call Palestine today! ABRAHAM OBEYED GOD. "So, Abram departed!" it is written. That is why he was made FATHER of the precious promises on which your eternal salvation rests! He OBEYED – immediately he DEPARTED! Yes, just as you and I too must OBEY, if we, WITH Abraham, are to inherit the promises!

Most people today have NO CONCEPTION of what is in store for the one who is really SAVED. The inheritance that awaits you – if you surrender to God – if you OBEY as Abraham obeyed – if you rely, not on YOUR faith, but on the very FAITH OF CHRIST – and if you are BORN AGAIN – that inheritance surpasses anything you have ever conceived of so FAR, that you haven't the slightest conception of your TRUE POTENTIAL DESTINY!

As we read in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." The inheritance which God has prepared for us cannot even be conceived of by the natural mind of man – but God DOES reveal it to us "THROUGH HIS SPIRIT!"

(1 Corinthians 2:10.)

Now WHAT did God promise Abraham? We are about to see. But first, READ these instructions.

Before You Begin

This lesson is intended to direct you to the BIBLE – to help you learn the truth of God's Word. Here is the method of study.

Is your Bible in front of you? If not, get your Bible – or Bibles, if you have more than one translation – BEFORE YOU DO ANOTHER THING! Have a good dictionary, a concordance if you own one, and your notepaper all placed in front of you on a desk or table.

Remember – you must open your Bible to EVERY PASSAGE. Never say to yourself, "Oh, I think I know what this scripture is referring to" -- and then pass over it. You need to "KEEP YOUR NOSE IN THE BIBLE," so to speak. You must read and re-read and think out each passage. MEDITATE on this new knowledge in your leisure time during the following twenty-four hours, and in your time of prayer -- so you WON'T FORGET it!

Make God's Word a PART OF YOU! Don't forget, this is a BIBLE STUDY Course not just a study of these words we send you.

Here is the method of making effective notes: Write down neatly on your paper the title of this lesson. Underneath that write down the lesson number. As you come to each question section, write down its heading. Then, UNDERNEATH at the left-hand margin of your paper, number each question and write down the scriptural answer to each, together with any pertinent ideas that come to your mind.

Be SURE to WRITE OUT the scripture which answers each question. If you have not done so before, BEGIN TO DO IT NOW! Writing down every word of each Bible passage, and any comments you wish to make as you go along, will help you greatly in REVIEWING and REMEMBERING.

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

And now for the lesson itself!

LESSON 13

The “Promised Land”

1. Did God call Abraham out of the land in which he had been residing? Genesis 12:1. Did God, at this same time, PROMISE that He would lead Abraham to another land – a PARTICULAR land? Same verse.
2. Does the Bible record that Abraham ARGUED with God about leaving the land, like most people do today, when they are called upon to give up the bad habits they have acquired in this world and follow where God leads them? Or did Abraham just Do AS GOD COMMANDED HIM? Genesis 12:4. What land did God lead Abraham into? Genesis 12:5.

COMMENT: Canaan is the present land of Judea-Palestine.

3. Now just what DID God promise ABRAHAM? Genesis 12:7.

COMMENT: The promise was the INHERITANCE of the LAND OF JUDEA-PALESTINE by Abraham’s descendants. Abraham then went down into the land of Egypt for a short time. When he returned to Canaan, what did God tell Abraham to do? Genesis 13:14-15. Did God reiterate His promise that He would give Abraham’s descendants this particular land? Did God also promise Abraham that he, too, would receive this land? Verse 15. And that Abraham’s descendants would be multiplied? Verse 16.

COMMENT: PALESTINE was PROMISED by God to Abraham a second time for emphasis. Notice that Palestine was PROMISED. That is why it’s called “the PROMISED LAND”!

4. For HOW LONG is it promised – FOREVER? Genesis 13:15.

COMMENT: The inheritance is to be an ETERNAL inheritance, which of necessity involves and INCLUDES EVERLASTING LIFE!

5. If one inherits a piece of LAND, the deed must describe the exact BOUNDARIES of the property. What is the description of the land we may hope to inherit? Genesis 15:18.

COMMENT: This is even more land than Judea-Palestine.

Furthermore, consider something from a booklet written

by the late Herbert W. Armstrong titled *The US & Britain in Prophecy*:

Notice carefully! Understand these promises! ...

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Eternal appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee and will multiply thee exceedingly ... thou shalt be a father of MANY NATIONS. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of MANY NATIONS have I made thee” (Gen. 17:1-5).

Notice, the promise is now conditional upon Abraham’s obedience and perfect living. Notice, the “great nation” now becomes many nations — more than one nation. This cannot refer to the “one seed,” Christ. The following verses prove that.

“And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings [more than one] shall come out of thee” (verse 6). Notice, these nations and kings shall come out of Abraham — physical generation — multiple seed, not just one descendant through whom scattered individuals may become Abraham’s children by spiritual begetting through Christ (Gal. 3:29). The scattered, individual Christians do not form NATIONS. The Church, it is true, is spoken of as “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (I Peter 2:9), but Christ’s Church is not divided into “many nations.” This is speaking of race, not grace.

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations ...” (Gen. 17:7). The “seed” is plural — “in their generations.” “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan [Palestine], for an everlasting possession; and I will be THEIR God” (verse 8).

Notice, the land — material possession — is promised to the plural seed, of whom He is “their,” not “his,” God. The plural pronoun “their” is used again in verse 9: “and thy seed after thee in their generations.”

Herbert W. Armstrong also noted that the Bible taught

something else interesting about God's promises to Abraham:

Notice now again how God first called Abram, and the twofold nature of His promises: "Now the Eternal had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a GREAT NATION ... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

Notice the twofold promise: 1) "I will make thee a GREAT NATION" -- the national, material promise that his flesh-born children should become a great nation ... 2) "... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" -- the spiritual promise of GRACE. This same promise is repeated in Genesis 22:18: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This particular "one seed" refers to Christ, as plainly affirmed in Galatians 3:8, 16.

Right here is where those who profess to be "Christians" -- and their teachers -- have fallen into error and scriptural blindness. They have failed to notice the twofold promise God made to Abraham. They recognize the messianic promise of spiritual salvation through the "one seed" -- Christ...

We have seen how both sets of promises, right of birth and gift of grace, were unconditionally made by God to Abraham. Both the birthright and the sceptre were repromised by the Eternal to Isaac and to Jacob. But the fact that should open your eyes, as a joyous truth newly discovered, is that from that point these two sets of promises became separated! The sceptre promises of the kingly line culminating in Christ, and of grace through Him, were handed on to JUDAH, son of Jacob and father of all Jews. But the astonishing truth is that the birthright promises were never given to the Jews!

Let that be repeated! Realize this! The birthright promises were never given to the Jews!

Turn to these passages -- read them in your own Bible!

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah ..."
(Gen. 49:10).

"... But the birthright was Joseph's" (1 Chron. 5:2).

Of course, it is well understood that the sceptre went to Judah and was handed down through the Jews. King David was of the tribe of Judah. All succeeding kings of David's dynasty were of the House of David, tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ was born of the House of David and the tribe of Judah (Armstrong HW. THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN IN PROPHECY. 1954, 1967, 1972, 1975, 1980 edition).

This is perhaps one of the biggest misunderstandings that mainstream theologians have—they simply do not realize that God gave both physical and spiritual promises to Abraham and that since the physical promises were NOT fulfilled by the Jews, that they had to somehow be fulfilled in these last days.

6. Was the physical promise EXPANDED until ultimately it included inheritance of the WHOLE EARTH? Genesis 28:13-14 and Romans 4:13.

COMMENT: The descendants of Abraham were to spread around the earth. Spiritually, Abraham's descendants will ultimately own/inherit the earth (Galatians 3:29; Matthew 5:5; Psalm 25:13).

Other scriptures to be studied in this lesson show that the promise of ETERNAL INHERITANCE includes MUCH MORE THAN LAND!

Obedience Before Inheritance

In making this promise to Abraham, God conditioned it on OBEDIENCE. Abraham DID OBEY!

First, he LEFT his native land, his friends and relatives, his old ways of life -- he FORSOOK ALL and followed where God led. Did God stop here in testing Abraham, and CONFIRM this priceless promise? OR, did God test Abraham further before doing so? Let us examine.

1. How did God test Abraham? Genesis 22:1, 2.

COMMENT: God tempts no man to cause him to fall. When the old King James Translation of the Bible was made, the word "tempts" meant "try," or to "TEST." Thus, more modern translators have used the word "test."

2. Did Abraham, unlike the first time, stop to reason it out, or make excuse, or rebel? Or did he dutifully OBEY God -- even rising early in the morning to do

so? Genesis 22:3.

3. Did God thus take Abraham's only son? Genesis 22:10-12.

COMMENT: God did not take the son – God merely wanted Abraham's WILLINGNESS TO OBEY, in and through faith. Because Abraham was FAITHFUL – full of faith – the Bible refers to Abraham as the symbolic "father" of ALL who are full of faith in this same sense.

4. But AFTER Abraham HAD obeyed – HAD been put to the test and found faithful – were there any OTHER CONDITIONS to the promise? Genesis 22:15-18. Underline heavily in your Bible the words, "BECAUSE you have DONE this thing," in verse 16, and the words, "BECAUSE you have OBEYED MY VOICE," in verse 18.

COMMENT: Now the PROMISE WAS UNCONDITIONAL. Abraham already HAD PERFORMED HIS PART of the COVENANT – this agreement.

5. What other scripture shows us this promise is now ABSOLUTELY SURE? – did Abraham faithfully obey God in EVERY WAY? Genesis 26:5.

COMMENT: It should be remembered that God's law – God's commandments – have been in effect from no later than Adam. The reason that we say 'no later' is that Lucifer and his followers also would have known about it. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). The same fundamental, eternal SPIRITUAL LAWS that Adam transgressed when he sinned are the SAME laws and commandments Abraham obeyed and kept – long before the sacrifices and rituals of Moses were instituted.

6. Were these SAME promises passed on down to Isaac, Abraham's son? Genesis 26:1-4. Why? Verse 5. Were ALL nations to be blessed through Isaac, as they were through Abraham? Verse 4.
7. Were these SAME PROMISES then passed down to Jacob, Isaac's son? Genesis 35:9-12. Note verse 11, then read comment below.

COMMENT: The explanation of verse 11 is this: the UNITED STATES is the "nation" referred to here, and the BRITISH COMMONWEALTH is the "company of nations." (For further information, you may wish to check out the paper Anglo - America in Prophecy & the Lost Tribes of Israel available at www.cogwriter.com).

Jacob – whose name was later changed to ISRAEL

(Genesis 32:28)– had twelve children. Each gave rise to one of the twelve tribes of ISRAEL – known collectively as the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, or ISRAELITES. One of these tribes originated from the brother JUDAH – known as the "Jews." All people of the earth who have not descended from Abraham, are called Gentiles by the Bible.

8. The promises were made, as we have seen, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's CHILDREN. Jacob's children are ISRAELITES, not Gentiles. There is a mistaken idea, today, that Christianity is a GENTILE religion. But through whom does CHRIST plainly say salvation is? John 4:22. And what does Paul add to this? Romans 2:10-11.

COMMENT: The SCEPTRE promise, through which Christ and salvation were promised, went specifically to the house of Judah, whose people are called JEWS. The Bible reveals that the COVENANTS and the PROMISES pertained to all of ISRAEL. So, we read in Romans 9:4: "who are ISRAELITES, TO WHOM pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, AND THE PROMISES."

Christians Are HEIRS to the Promises

Since these promises were made specifically to Abraham and his descendants mentioned above, how can ALL nations also be BLESSED through these promises? Let's understand.

1. Did God promise Abraham that ALL nations of the earth would be blessed through his one "seed"? Genesis 12:3 and 22:18. Who is this "seed"? Galatians 3:8, 16.

COMMENT: The word "seed" in Genesis 22:18 refers specifically to Abraham's ONE SEED, who is Christ – not to Abraham's MULTIPLE "seed," or REMAINDER of his blood descendants (Genesis 13:16 and 17:8).

2. Doesn't Luke 3:23, 34 prove that Jesus was a BLOOD DESCENDANT – a SEED – of Abraham?

COMMENT: Joseph was actually the SON-IN-LAW of Heli (see margin of your Bible) who was the father of Mary. Jesus' bloodline was through His MOTHER Mary who descended from Abraham (verse 34). (If you would like more information, we have a short document titled: Why Does Jesus Have Two Different Genealogies listed

in Matthew 1 and Luke 3? at the www.cogwriter.com website.)

3. HOW did Paul say that Gentiles could share in the promises made to Abraham? Galatians 3:26-29.

COMMENT: Unless a Gentile becomes a baptized SPIRITUAL Israelite through Christ, there is NO HOPE of becoming an HEIR to the SPIRITUAL promises made to Abraham! This is made possible only through becoming "Christ's" – by becoming a SPIRIT-BEGOTTEN CHRISTIAN!

4. What did Paul say the CONVERTED Ephesian Gentiles used to be IN TIMES PAST? Ephesians 2:11-12.

COMMENT: This doesn't sound like Christianity is a GENTILE religion. THIS doesn't sound like the NEW Covenant is a GENTILE covenant! WHILE these particular Ephesians Paul was here talking to were Gentiles in the FLESH, they had become SPIRITUAL Israelites THROUGH Christ. But they were "STRANGERS from the covenants of promise, having NO HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD in the world," BEFORE conversion!

5. But NOW, through Christ, are they made near? Ephesians 2:13. Are they strangers and foreigners anymore? Verse 19. Are they fellow citizens with the saints, and of the SPIRITUAL Household of God? Same verse.

COMMENT: And so today, WHOSOEVER WILL from EVERY nation, may come and take of the waters of eternal life FREELY, because God has kept His promise, and the promised Seed, Christ, has come.

What a glorious, matchless privilege to be taken into the very Household of God – to be able to call the Eternal Creator our FATHER! For THROUGH CHRIST, Abraham becomes our fleshly father, and GOD becomes our spiritual Father. We read in Galatians 3:7, KJV: "Know ye therefore that they which are of FAITH, the same are the CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM." That's why Abraham is called the "father" of the faithful (Romans 4:11) – whether Jew or Gentile!

Again, in Romans 8:14-15: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are SONS OF GOD ... by whom we cry out, Abba, Father." Yes, now SPIRIT-BEGOTTEN sons who shall become BORN SONS at the time of the resurrection – to become INHERITORS of the Kingdom of God!

The Kingdom of God is the FAMILY of God – the GOD FAMILY! It's a glorious FAMILY RELATIONSHIP! This glorified INHERITANCE surpasses anything you have ever

conceived of in your mind!

But what is the difference between inheriting the EARTH and the KINGDOM of God – WHERE shall we inherit the Kingdom? Let's study further and see.

NO Man Has Ascended to Heaven – Except Jesus

We have clearly seen, from the Bible, that the EARTH IS THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAVED – NOT heaven. But where does the Bible specifically SAY we DO NOT go to heaven?

1. Did Jesus dogmatically state that NO ONE, beside Himself, has ever ascended up to heaven? John 3:13.

COMMENT: The Bible plainly states that NO MAN has ever ASCENDED UP into the heaven where God is, EXCEPT Christ!

2. What else did Christ tell His disciples? John 13:33.

COMMENT: Even Christ's own disciples were told they could NOT go up into heaven where He was going.

3. But DID Christ give them an idea of WHERE they would be and WHAT they would be doing WHEN He returns? John 14:2, 3. Read also Matthew 25:31, 34.

COMMENT: "Mansions" – rooms/chambers (Jeremiah 35:2) – in the "Father's house" – God's Temple in the Old Testament times – were occupied by God's priests. Some of these ROOMS represented POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY.

WHEN Jesus will have returned to this earth, as King of kings, RULER of all nations on earth, THEN He will say to the saved: "Come, you blessed ... INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you." The Kingdom of God is the divine, ruling FAMILY of God. It will rule all nations, here ON EARTH! The saints will HAVE POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY in that Kingdom. To enter into – to INHERIT – the divine Kingdom of God is a destiny of such marvellous GLORY that your mind cannot grasp it now! And our inheritance, as divine members of the very GOD FAMILY, shall be the earth for an EVERLASTING POSSESSION.

WHAT'S WRONG with the earth?

Well, essentially nothing but SIN – rebellion against GOD and His eternal SPIRITUAL LAWS that GOVERN peace and happiness and joy! Happiness and joy – a GLORIFIED

condition such as you MAY inherit – is not a matter of geographical location! It is a spiritual condition! There will be NO SIN in that happy world tomorrow! No liars – no murderers – no thieves or robbers. Think of it – there'll be NO SATAN to deceive people, no locks on doors – no jails, no hospitals – no poorhouses! No strife, no war – no sickness or disease no poverty nor hunger, nor want!

But some wonder, “Doesn't the Bible show people inhabiting heaven?”

There are certain passages in the Bible that some have pointed to claiming that heaven is the reward of the saved and that there are people there.

To a degree, this is partially based upon mistranslations or misunderstandings.

One such passage is Revelation 19:1 in the KJV. Here is how the old WCG addressed that (LO45. Personal Correspondence Department):

Thank you for your question concerning Revelation 19:1, which speaks of “much people in heaven.”

This is an unfortunate translation of the Greek word ochlos. This word can mean people, but it also has a variety of other English synonyms. Since the Bible elsewhere plainly tells us that the reward of the saved is this earth -- not heaven -- it is evident that another synonym of the Greek word ochlos should have been chosen.

The Goodspeed translation and the Revised Standard Version render ochlos as “multitude.” The Moffat translation renders it as “host,” while the Amplified New Testament and the Numeric English New Testament render it as “crowd.”

These translations best convey the meaning of the original Greek. Thus, the “people” of Revelation 19:1 are actually the “host, crowd, or multitude” of heaven. This verse is speaking of angels who are in heaven. They are the great multitude that sings forth praises to God (Rev. 5:11-12).

Notice that the NKJV translates Revelation 19:1 as follows:

1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! (Revelation 19:1, NKJV)

Another passage that has confused some is Philippians 3:20:

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: (Philippians 3:20, KJV)

Again, this is a mistranslation. The Greek word for conversation is logoi and is so translated in Luke 24:17. The word mistranslated as conversation in Philippians 3:20 is politeuma, which has to do with citizenship. Notice the proper translation:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

Because New Jerusalem comes down from heaven (Revelation 21) and we are not of this world (John 15:19), our citizenship resides in heaven. Why? Because we Christians are now the people of God:

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

And since God's throne is in heaven, that is where our citizenship currently resides.

What about Moses and Elijah? Notice the following:

1 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and

were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (Matthew 17:1-9)

Notice that this was a vision as Jesus plainly stated. Moses and Elijah are not now alive in heaven.

No people are shown to be populating heaven. This does not mean after the resurrection that spirit beings will not be able to visit the "new heaven" that the Bible tells of in Revelation 21, just that heaven itself is not the reward of the saved.

Fulfillment of Promises Just AHEAD

Has Abraham already inherited the promises?

First, notice the inspired words of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit – Stephen who PAID WITH HIS LIFE for these inspired words of Scripture. They are in the Book of Acts.

1. Has Abraham yet RECEIVED the inheritance God promised to him? Acts 7:2-5. Note especially verse 5.

COMMENT: Abraham NEVER RECEIVED the promised inheritance – though God's promise was made UNCONDITIONAL because Abraham HAD OBEYED God!

2. Was Abraham merely a SOJOURNER, during his lifetime, in the land that God had promised to him? Hebrews 11:8-10, KJV. Note verse 9 particularly. Even as he lay dying, had he, as yet, RECEIVED the promises? Verse 13. But does verse 8 point out that Abraham will, IN THE FUTURE, receive the fulfillment of these promises? Note the words "AFTER receive"!
3. Does the Bible say that Isaac and Jacob were heirs to this SAME promise? Hebrews 11:9. Have they received it, as yet? Verse 13.

COMMENT: Do you grasp what these inspired Scriptures of God say? They say in plain language that all these died (most of them over 1,000 years before this was written—and also years after Jesus was resurrected), NOT having

received their inheritance – the very FATHERS to whom the promises were made did NOT "go to their 'reward' at death!" THUS SAYS THE LORD!

4. Was Abraham STILL DEAD during the time of the apostles? John 8:52, 53. Then Abraham has NOT received the promises TO THIS DAY, has he?

COMMENT: All through the New Testament you read that Christians who become Abraham's "children" through Christ are NOT NOW inheritors – they are spoken of only as heirs. An HEIR is one who has NOT YET come into his inheritance. So, the dead in Christ even of our age have NOT received their inheritance either!

Now WHY has Abraham, even to this day, as yet not inherited the promise? Listen! Christ came to CONFIRM – MAKE POSSIBLE – THE FULFILLMENT of the PROMISE of eternal inheritance of the earth made to Abraham. This constitutes one of the "BETTER PROMISES" of the NEW TESTAMENT! Christ, in CONFIRMING these promises made to Abraham, preached always the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD which is to occupy and govern the EARTH – the SAME earth that has been promised to Abraham for an eternal inheritance.

Abraham will soon be BORN INTO the Kingdom of God! Abraham's inheritance is thus to be the KINGDOM OF GOD! The SAME INHERITANCE you and I may have by becoming Abraham's seed, through Christ.

To Inherit the Kingdom of God

1. Does Matthew 6:33 verify the fact that it is the KINGDOM OF GOD we are to strive to enter – and NOT heaven?
2. Does Matthew 7:21 also verify the fact that the inheritance of the saved will be the Kingdom of God? It is the Kingdom OF heaven! It is in the Kingdom of God (cf. Mark 4:30-31), often referred to as the Kingdom of heaven by Matthew (cf. Matthew 13:31), where these blessed promises will be fulfilled. It is in the Kingdom of God that the promise will be fulfilled for the meek to inherit the earth and the pure to see God. Look forward to the good news of the blessings in the Kingdom of God!
3. Does Ephesians 5:5 plainly show that the unrepentant sinner (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) will have NO INHERITANCE in the Kingdom of God? Don't these preceding scriptures plainly show that the

inheritance of the saved is the KINGDOM OF GOD?

4. But that Kingdom, Jesus said, is NOT of this world – THIS AGE! In His great prophecy of events now making the headlines in world news today, what did Jesus say in Luke 21:31?

Jesus taught that the kingdom is not now part of this present world:

36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God will RULE THE WORLD. IT IS not yet established – but today it is “NEAR” – and IT’S LATER THAN YOU THINK!

WHY is it that Abraham and all the “HEIRS according to the promise” must REMAIN heirs for a short time longer? There are several reasons. Let us see.

5. Has the Kingdom of God, of which Christians are HEIRS, been established upon this earth yet? – what did Christ tell His disciples when they thought He would establish His world-ruling Kingdom in their day? Luke 19:11-13, 15.

COMMENT: Christ represented Himself here as the young nobleman going to the far country – heaven – to receive the right to RULE the Kingdom, showing it would be set up and would take over the rule of all nations at His SECOND COMING. The point is that the Kingdom of God has NOT YET been established on this earth so that Christians may inherit it!

6. Does Matthew 6:10 also prove that God’s Kingdom is YET to be established ON OUR EARTH?

Jesus taught that His followers should pray for the kingdom to come, hence they do not already possess it (Matthew 6:9-10).

Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God:

1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). Jesus taught that His presence alone was not the kingdom, as the kingdom was not established on the Earth then

as that is why He did what He did not cast out demons in His name then: 28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matthew 12:28).

The true kingdom is in the future—it was not there then. It is not here now as these verses from Mark show:

47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast ... (Mark 9:47).

23 Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again 11 and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:23-25).

25 Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25).

43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage ... (Mark 15:43).

7. Is the record of each who is to receive this inheritance being kept in heaven? 1 Peter 1:3, 4. WHEN IS the salvation of the saved revealed? And WHEN IS the possession of the inheritance given? Verse 5.

COMMENT: Note that the record of the inheritance is “reserved” – is kept – in heaven, and that salvation, and therefore the POSSESSION of the inheritance, is to be “revealed” – given – “in the LAST TIME” – at the soon-coming END OF THIS AGE. This is additional proof that the Kingdom has NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED!

8. But there’s still another reason why we CANNOT INHERIT the Kingdom at this present time. We are now composed of flesh and blood. Can we inherit the Kingdom while we are composed of this material? 1 Corinthians 15:50.

COMMENT: No flesh and blood can INHERIT the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is NOT A HUMAN KINGDOM in our way of thinking—it is a DIVINE KINGDOM – the God Kingdom! Our human bodies must

be changed to another kind of material to become a PART of that ultimate Kingdom! (There will be humans in the millennial portion of the kingdom, but they will be ruled over by those resurrected Christians who will then be spirit-beings reigning with Jesus per scriptures like Revelation 20:4-6).

9. Does Paul say our flesh-and-blood bodies will be CHANGED? 1 Corinthians 15:51, 53. Since we will be born of the Spirit then, of what will our bodies be composed? John 3:6. What is this process called – being “born again”? John 3:3. And if we are in this manner “born again,” can we “see” – ENTER – the Kingdom of God? Same verse.

COMMENT: Our mortal human bodies will then be CHANGED into SPIRIT BODIES – bodies which can INHERIT the Kingdom of God. Our present flesh is corruptible, subject to aging and decay. But spirit things and spirit beings are ETERNALLY NEW.

10. How LONG will it take us to be changed from our present material substance into spirit? 1 Corinthians 15:52, the first nine words.

COMMENT: Now we begin to see why Abraham, and his children through Christ, have not as YET inherited the promises! This resurrection has not yet occurred!

Inheritors at the Resurrection

But to go further. We cannot come into ETERNAL inheritance until we come into ETERNAL LIFE. And what is our only HOPE of inheriting eternal life? The RESURRECTION from the dead! For it is appointed to ALL to die once (Hebrews 9:27) – everyone of us must die even though it be for only a split second. Without a RESURRECTION no one would LIVE again.

Is your hope of a resurrection well founded? Do you actually have the PROMISE from God, Himself, that He will resurrect you? Here’s what God says.

1. Did God, Himself, inspire the apostle Paul to pose the question, “IF there is NO resurrection of the dead ...”? 1 Corinthians 15:13. What does God say of Christ, IF there is no resurrection? Same verse.
2. If this be the case, is our faith in a future resurrection EMPTY? 1 Corinthians 15:14. And are those who are asleep in Christ PERISHED? Verse 18. Strong scripture, that!

COMMENT: The dead IN CHRIST are UTTERLY PERISHED – UNLESS there is to be a RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD! How DIFFERENT from the modern fables to which a deceived world has been turned today!

So Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are DEAD. And, unless there is to be a RESURRECTION – a rising up FROM the grave they are PERISHED!

3. What did JESUS say to show there surely will be a resurrection? Matthew 22:31. WHAT IS being discussed here – the RESURRECTION of the dead? Didn’t God say He is the God of the LIVING – not the dead? Verse 32.

COMMENT: Jesus clearly spoke of a FUTURE resurrection of the dead. He showed that the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – who have been DEAD all these centuries – is so SURE, it was AS IF it had already taken place! BY TWISTING this text many try to prove Abraham is not dead but has already gone to and come into his promised inheritance – just the OPPOSITE of what Jesus meant!

HOW Christ Made Our Inheritance Possible

1. What is SIN? 1 John 3:4, KJV. What is the PENALTY – “the wages of” – sin? Romans 6:23. Has ALL mankind sinned? Romans 3:23.

COMMENT: God is Creator and Owner of the universe and all that is within it. He is also the great LAWGIVER. Whoever is NOT OBEDIENT to Him, SINS! Sin causes so much sorrow, suffering, unhappiness and anguish, all who disobey God are worthy of death – ETERNAL death! And ALL have sinned. ALL are therefore WORTHY OF ETERNAL DEATH. If WE were to PAY the penalty of our OWN sins, none of us would have eternal life – none could inherit the Kingdom of God as an eternal inheritance.

2. But did Christ give Himself – shed His LIFE BLOOD – in our place, so that we need not have to pay the penalty of our sins and thus be deprived of eternal inheritance – the Kingdom of God? 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; Romans 5:8-10.

COMMENT: By DYING – by shedding His LIFE BLOOD – Christ was able to pay for ALL the sins of mankind for ALL TIME because He was GOD INCARNATE – GOD MADE FLESH! (John 1:14.) God, the Father, also created all things

BY Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9; John 1:1-3). Therefore, as God and our Maker, Jesus' PHYSICAL life was of GREATER VALUE than the sum total of ALL human lives!

This is HOW Christ CONFIRMED – made possible – our INHERITANCE of the Kingdom for eternity. Through His DEATH, He made it POSSIBLE for us to have ETERNAL LIFE – to exist for all eternity!

3. Did Christ leave a WILL, or last testament, at the time of His death? Hebrews 9:15, KJV. Notice the word “testament.” A “testament” is a “will.” What does it PROMISE those who are called to salvation? Same verse. When a person makes a will, must he DIE BEFORE it comes into force? Verses 16-17. Are those who are to receive salvation called HEIRS? Hebrews 1:14, KJV.

COMMENT: Christ wished to make eternal inheritance of the Kingdom of God available to all people. He did this by making a WILL – A TESTAMENT. This is why the last fourth of your Bible is called the “New Testament.” It teaches you HOW you may become an HEIR to the PROMISE OF ETERNAL INHERITANCE in the Kingdom of God which is to be established upon this earth!! A testament, or will, is of no effect unless the one making it DIES. Christ DIED SO that you may INHERIT the promises FROM HIM!

What We Must DO!

And now comes the CRUX OF THIS WHOLE LESSON! Is there anything that we must DO in order to inherit these priceless promises? Ponder this section well, for it reveals what we must DO in this life to become HEIRS and finally INHERITORS of God's Kingdom.

1. Did God the Father GIVE His only begotten Son so that we might become heirs to the promises? John 3:16, Galatians 3:29, and Ephesians 3:4-6.
2. Did Christ voluntarily GIVE Himself as our sacrifice in order that we might have this privilege? Luke 22:42. Was His body DISFIGURED more than that of any other man? Isaiah 52:14. Did His perspiration appear as BLOOD at Gethsemane, shortly before He became our sacrifice? Luke 22:44. (His profuse sweat was tinged with blood!)
3. Is it because of Christ's suffering and death for us that God says we have been “bought” BY HIM? 1 Corinthians 7:23. And is it God, therefore, whom we are now to SERVE? Same verse. But what do some

thoughtless people say? Malachi 3:14. Do some even go so far as to deny the Lord that “BOUGHT” them? 2 Peter 2:1.

4. What does Christ tell us, by example, to do IF we are to receive – enter into – the ETERNAL INHERITANCE? Matthew 19:17 Isn't this exactly the SAME thing that Abraham did? Genesis 26:5. Note the word “COMMANDMENTS.” (For more on the commandments, check out our free booklet *The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast* available at www.ccog.org.)
5. Did Paul SERVE God? Acts 27:23. Doesn't he point out that even the service we give to our earthly bosses is to be considered as service rendered unto GOD? And are God's heirs to do this? Colossians 3:22-24.
6. Are we to be obedient in ALL THINGS? 2 Corinthians 2:9. Even in the THOUGHTS we allow ourselves to think? 2 Corinthians 10:5.
7. Why is obedience to God necessary today as it was in Abraham's day? Romans 7:7, 12.

COMMENT: Keeping the Law – God's commands – is the ONLY way we may live in HARMONY with others, and with God. It's the ONLY way we can develop the CHARACTER OF GOD – with the HELP of God's Holy Spirit – so we can be BORN of God and INHERIT His Kingdom for eternity! For more on the commandments, check out our free booklet *The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast* available at www.ccog.org.

We Receive the Promises WHEN Jesus Returns

1. WHEN will Abraham and his children through Christ receive the promises? Will there be a SIGNAL given for this great event? 1 Corinthians 15:52. Is this the LAST trump? Same verse. Our bodies are then changed from mortality to WHAT? Verse 53.
2. And what ELSE IS to happen at that very same time? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. Will Abraham and his children through Christ – both the dead and the living – finally be “saved” – caught up in the resurrection to be with Christ WHEREVER HE MAY BE from thenceforth? Verse 17. Since Christ has already been here once, doesn't this all happen at Christ's SECOND COMING?

Same verses.

3. And WHERE does Christ go in that day? Zechariah 14:4. Does He also begin to establish His world-ruling GOVERNMENT at that time? Zechariah 14:9, and all verses to the end of the chapter. And will all the saints, or Christians – Abraham and his children through Christ – the HEIRS who are to inherit this EARTH forever – be with the returning Christ? Verse 5, last part.

COMMENT: Yes, at the last trump, Christ will return to this earth – this time as “KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS,” to reign and to rule all nations of the earth for the first time. When He comes to set up His Kingdom, THEN Abraham and his children in Christ who have died shall be RESURRECTED TO IMMORTALITY, to INHERIT THE PROMISE of the KINGDOM OF GOD – a world-ruling GOVERNMENT headed and ruled by Christ, occupying the very LAND PROMISED TO ABRAHAM – the land of PALESTINE, from the Nile to the Euphrates River. And this KINGDOM, composed of IMMORTALS which flesh, and blood cannot enter, shall rule over all other FLESHLY nations of the earth during the Millennial Utopia!

The Promise Is NOT Heaven!

JESUS said: “Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit THE EARTH” (Matthew 5:5). That’s part of the Sermon on the Mount – and certainly every Christian BELIEVES the Sermon on the Mount!

Then we must BELIEVE, if we are Christians, that what the saved inherit is THE EARTH – and NOT HEAVEN! The inspired apostle John plainly said, “NO ONE HAS ASCENDED TO HEAVEN NO MAN” (John 3:13). THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING!

1. WHAT do those who “wait on the Lord” INHERIT? Psalm 37:9.
2. WHAT shall those blessed of God INHERIT? Psalm 37:22.
3. WHAT shall the righteous INHERIT, and HOW LONG shall they dwell there? Psalm 37:29.
4. And WHAT does God promise to those who “KEEP HIS WAY”? Psalm 37:34.

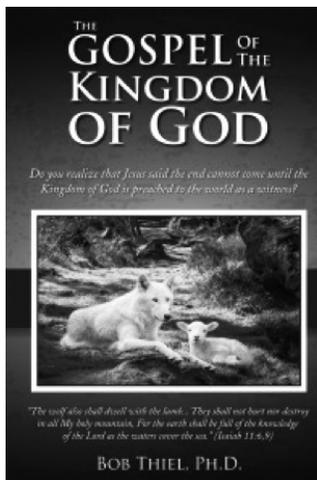
COMMENT: There is absolutely NO scripture in all the Bible that promises HEAVEN to the saved in Christ. And

yet, most people seem to be oblivious to these positive, PLAIN STATEMENTS from God Almighty, and have carelessly taken for granted, WITHOUT QUESTION, the FALSE IDEA of “going to heaven”!

Notice the words Christ will utter at His imminent return: “WHEN the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, THEN He will sit on the THRONE of His glory. THEN the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD’” (Matthew 25:31, 34).

Yes, the KINGDOM of God is the PLACE PREPARED. Jesus said He went to PREPARE A PLACE for us in that Kingdom. He also said He went to GET FOR HIMSELF a Kingdom, and to RETURN. And WHEN He returns, as KING of kings, and when that Kingdom is established on EARTH, THEN it is that the joyful call goes out, “COME! ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU.”

Did the Old Testament Teach the Kingdom of God?



By Bob Thiel

Were the children of Israel aware of the Kingdom of God from the Hebrew scriptures?

Interestingly, the Bible shows that Jesus' first and last recorded sermon involved proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 1:3).

God's kingdom is something that the Jews of Jesus' time should have known something about as it was mentioned in their scriptures, which we now call the Old Testament.

Daniel Taught About the Kingdom

The prophet Daniel wrote:

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. 41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and

consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:40-44).

18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.' (Daniel 7:18).

21 "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. (Daniel 7:21-22)

From Daniel, we learn that the time will come when the Kingdom of God will destroy the kingdoms of this world and will last forever. We also learn that the saints will have their part in receiving this kingdom.

Many portions of Daniel's prophecies are for our time in the 21st century.

Notice some passages from the New Testament:

12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. 13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:12-14)

So, we see in both the Old and New Testaments the concept that there will be an end time earthly kingdom with ten parts and that God will destroy it and establish His kingdom.

Isaiah Taught About the Kingdom

God inspired Isaiah to write about the first part of the Kingdom of God, the thousand-year reign known as the millennium, this way:

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

3 His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by

the hearing of His ears; 4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity

for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.

10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:1-10)

The reason I referred to this as the first part or first phase of the Kingdom of God, is that this is a time where it will be physical (prior to the time when the holy city, New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, Revelation 21) and will last a thousand years. Isaiah confirmed the physical aspect of this phase when he continued with:

11 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea.

12 He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. 13 Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, And Judah shall not harass Ephraim. 14 But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; Together they shall plunder the people of the East; They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; And the people of Ammon shall obey them. 15 The Lord will utterly destroy the

tongue of the Sea of Egypt; With His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River, and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dryshod. 16 There will be a highway for the remnant of His People Who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 11:11-16)

Isaiah was also inspired to write:

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. ... 11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. (Isaiah 2:2-4,11)

Thus, it will be a utopian time of peace on earth. Ultimately, this will be forever, with Jesus ruling. Based upon various scriptures (Psalm 90:4; 92:1; Isaiah 2:11; Hosea 6:2), the Jewish Talmud teaches this lasts 1,000 years (Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin Folio 97a).

Isaiah was inspired to also write the following:

6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Notice that Isaiah said that Jesus would come and establish a kingdom with a government. While many who profess Christ quote this passage, especially in December each year, they tend to overlook that it is prophesying more than the fact that Jesus would be

born. The Bible shows that the Kingdom of God has a government with laws over subjects, and that Jesus will be over it. Isaiah, Daniel, and others prophesied it.

The laws of God are the way of love (Matthew 22:37-40; John 15:10) and the Kingdom of God will be ruled based upon those laws. Hence the Kingdom of God, despite how many in the world view it, will be based upon love.

Psalms and More

It was not just Daniel and Isaiah that God inspired to write about the coming Kingdom of God.

Ezekiel was inspired to write that those of the tribes of Israel (not just the Jews) who were scattered during the time of the Great Tribulation would be gathered together in the millennial kingdom:

17 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."' 18 And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. 19 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 21 But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 11:17-21)

The descendants of the tribes of Israel will no longer be scattered but will obey God's statutes and stop eating abominable things (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14).

Notice the following in the Psalms about the good news of God's kingdom:

27 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. 28 For the kingdom is the Lord's, And He rules over the nations. (Psalms 22:27-28)

6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. (Psalms 45:6)

1 Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord,

all the earth. 2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. 3 Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. (Psalms 96:1-3; also cf. 1 Chronicles 16:23-24)

10 All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, And Your saints shall bless You. 11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, 12 To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Psalm 145:10-13)

Various writers in the Old Testament also wrote about aspects of the kingdom (e.g. Ezekiel 20:33; Obadiah 21; Micah 4:7).

So, when Jesus began teaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, His immediate audience had some familiarity with the basic concept.

YOU May NOT ESCAPE the Tribulation!



Camels in Petra

By Leroy Neff

This article was originally published by the old Radio Church of God in its Good News magazine, January 1962. Petra is a place some believe Philadelphia Christians may one day be temporarily protected in.

Some who think they are going to a place of safety MAY NOT GET THERE AT ALL! Read WHY and whether this could include YOU!

GOD'S Church has heard many times the blunt warning

of Jesus Christ: “Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape” (Luke 21:36).

We have been told many times to watch world conditions, to understand and know the prophecies of God, so that we will know when the time comes for God’s people to escape. We have also been taught many, many times in sermons, in broadcasts, and in Church services that we are to pray consistently without intermission, not neglecting prayer for a single day so that we might be accounted worthy to escape. But some are neglecting their duty!

Amazing Prophecy for Today

The escape of God’s Church to safety is mentioned in Revelation 12. In this chapter is an amazing prophecy concerning the Church of God from ancient times until the return of Jesus Christ.

During our time Satan will be very angry with God’s people, since he knows that he has but a short time left to deceive the nations. He is going to increase the pressure against God’s people and is going to do all he can to increase the persecution of deceived men against us! This persecution will become so severe that God will find it necessary to supernaturally protect His people, and help them escape to a place of safety, before the full force of tribulation and world trouble comes on the whole earth.

Notice the symbolism of this supernatural protection:

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent (Rev. 12:14).

Not all of God’s Church will be accounted worthy to go to safety. Verse 17 of this same chapter shows that after those in God’s Church (who are doing their part in the Work of God) go to a place of safety there will be a “remnant” left. They keep God’s Commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ but are not accounted worthy to escape. This remnant will be subject to the full wrath of Satan the Devil. He makes war against them.

Why?

This same remnant is implied in the prophecies of Revelation, chapter three. In the second and third chapters we have the various eras of God’s Church mentioned in detail. At the present time we are in the

Philadelphia era of God’s Church. This particular Church is promised that it will be kept from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try those that dwell on earth. (Rev. 3:10.) But not all who are with us are spiritually of us — some are already in a Laodicean spirit! The last Church, the Church of Laodicea, does not have this promise. They receive the fury of Satan. Very likely few of these people will survive the terrible times of trouble and torture that will follow.

We should all make our calling and election sure. We do not have time to wait for a year, five years or ten years to get ready to be “spiritual.” We cannot wait to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The time to be preparing is now! Of those who regularly attend God’s Church many are weak and carnal-minded. They have no zeal. They do not have their hearts completely and totally in God’s work and are not doing with their might the great work that God has commissioned all of us to do.

Moreover, only about half of the people listed on our records as baptized members in God’s Church go to the Feast of Tabernacles. Of course, some aren’t able to go because of sickness. Others are not able to go because their second tithe is not adequate to permit them to go each year. Some women who have unconverted mates are unable to go because their husbands will not permit them. God understands this.

But that does not excuse the others!

And of those who do attend God’s Festivals there is always a “mixed multitude” who are like the Israelites of old who complain, who will not obey God or respect the authority in His Church.

Do You Have the Wrong Goal?

Many of you have the wrong goal — and don’t know it! You are looking forward to escaping to safety as your goal in life. In effect, you have exactly the same belief and goal that many of the religious sects have today.

In some churches it is called the rapture. In others it is escaping hell by “going to heaven.” The idea of going to a place of safety is exactly the same to some of you as it is to those who believe in the rapture theory.

The erroneous impression is that if you can be accounted worthy to escape to a place of safety, all of your troubles will be over. You have made the grade! Your entry into God’s Kingdom is then completely assured. Your trials and troubles will be over.

Don't be so sure!

You need to understand more about the circumstances that are prophesied concerning the time when God's Church does go to safety!

This is a time of extreme trouble for the whole world. This is a time when every man's hand will be against his neighbor. It will be a time of crime, war, of pestilence, famine and of supernatural occurrences in the weather and in the sky.

It is a time that will become so terrible that nothing like it has ever come on earth before. We find an account of it in Matthew 24. The gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached to the world, and after that the climax of this age is going to come.

There will be the abomination of desolation that Daniel foretold. When this abomination is set up, those who may be in the land of Judea are commanded to flee to the mountains. It will be so pressing that Jesus said they should not even go into the house to take out clothes or other necessities.

It is a time so terrible and urgent that those women who are pregnant, or those who have suckling children will have great difficulty (verse 19). It is a time when those in Judea will take a "flight" — flee for their lives. God's people will be as "a brand plucked from the fire," or as an animal snatched away from a trap. A time of extreme distress and trouble not only on the world but also on God's own people.

John describes this time of trouble in the Book of Revelation as a time when Satan in his anger is going to "cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (Rev. 12:15). Every kind of snare will be laid for God's people. But God intervenes supernaturally and helps the woman (verse 16).

Paradise? — or Wilderness?

It is not a time of ease, but a time of trouble. You should begin to see now that for some, this will be the beginning of their problems, not the end. Some will find they have not grown spiritually enough to overcome the trials and troubles. Some will fall by the wayside. Some people, as the Jews in Europe under Hitler, will look at the paltry things they have accumulated in this life, property, bank accounts, and comfort. These must be left completely and totally. Others will see loved ones and relatives who

are not in God's Church. Some of these people will find that when they count the cost, they will not "leave all" literally, and follow Jesus Christ. They will find that they cannot leave relatives, friends, or material conveniences.

They will not be accounted worthy to escape. It will be a time of serious decision for God's people and many will not make the right decision!

We know that the Faithful will escape to a place of safety, but where? Revelation 12:14 states that it will be in the "wilderness" — not a paradise! In the time of the end the ancient land of Edom, Moab and Ammon shall escape conquest by the revived Roman Empire (Dan. 11:41). Here is a small desert area which will be protected from this Fascist — Roman Catholic system. The place of escape in all likelihood will be within this desolate region.

The land anciently occupied by these nations is to the southeast of the Dead Sea!

In this region is a very famous natural stronghold called Petra.

Certain scriptures seem to indicate that this place may be the place of protection. The Greek word Petra is Sela in the Hebrew. This same word is often translated Rock in the Old Testament. Isaiah 42:1 states: "Let the inhabitants of the rock (Sela or Petra) sing, let them shout from the top of the mountain. There are few inhabitants of Petra today, only a few bedouin Arabs live in the area. This text speaks of God's people shouting from the top of the mountains giving glory to God because of His might and strength. Certainly, this must be referring to God's people rejoicing over the greatness and power of God who protects them in safety.

In Isaiah 16:1-5 we have another prophecy which may be veiled reference to the protection of God's people — "My fugitives (or outcasts)" — in this area.

Even the book of Psalms refers to this place. "Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?" (Psalms 108:10). The fortified city referred to here may well be the natural fortified city of Petra which is located in the area of ancient Edom.

There are other scriptures which also indicate that Petra may be the place of protection. But God will make this evident and clear at the proper time and in the proper way.

Petra is such a rugged area that apparently only one airplane has ever landed there. It was a very tiny airplane and the pilot risked his life in performing

such a precarious act. This was reported in one of the national magazines and is a feat which is not expected to be duplicated. With this in mind, don't think that God is going to provide jet transportation direct from your home to Petra if you are accounted worthy to escape to safety.

Even if the prophecy of Revelation 12:14 would include transportation by air, it obviously would not take God's people all the way to Petra.

There is no airport in Petra. Nor any major airports nearby. The only way to fly there would be by huge airplanes which probably could not land any nearer than Jerusalem, Amman, Jordan or Cairo, Egypt! It is still many difficult miles to Petra! Remember the trials of the Exodus under Moses?

Complainers Will be Unworthy to Escape

If you went three days into a hot, dusty desert without water would you complain? What if you had to fast for several days?

Would you complain and rebel against Jesus Christ?

Today, we complain about little things. Most of us have not had to go without food or water. We complain when the water doesn't taste right or we complain when we do not have completely "balanced diet." We complain if we don't have fresh vegetables or fresh fruit. We complain when we are not able to keep up to the same financial status of others who may be more prosperous. We complain about those whom God has set over us in authority, just as the ancient Israelites did.

We will never get to a place of safety with such wrong and rotten attitudes!

What is Petra Like?

If Petra is to be the place of safety for those accounted worthy to escape, we ought to know a little bit about what it is like. There are library books available about Petra and also certain magazine articles. The February 1935 issue and the December 1955 issue of the National Geographic Magazine had articles about Petra. These are usually available in used book stores or second-hand stores. If you still have a copy of the November 1956 issue of The PLAIN TRUTH, or can borrow one, you will find an article by Mrs. Herbert W. Armstrong about Petra.

From one point of view, Petra is a very beautiful place. It is a very colorful desert, and has many, many caves

in the sides of the mountains. These caves were dug many centuries ago. The caves are dirty. It is very dry, and water is extremely limited. The area consists almost wholly of rock and wild figs and oleanders.

There are extremes of cold and heat. On page 865 of the December 1955 issue of National Geographic we find the following quotation: "In our own time, the remoteness of Petra and its intense summer heat and winter cold have limited exploration."

Petra is no garden of Eden. It is no "cloud 19."

If this is the place where God's Church goes to safety, it will be one which will present many physical difficulties. If God's people are permitted to go, there they will be "cave dwellers" for three and one-half years!

We have become used to soft living. We have become used to warm, dry beds, hot and cold running water, central heating, and the many other multitudes of gadgets and appliances that are found in the modern American household. Petra is not like this.

From a physical point of view this is not going to be the wonderful place that many people have erroneously pictured. If you are looking forward to this event as a goal INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST, you have the wrong goal.

But it is not all bad! There will be difficult problems, but by God's spirit they can be overcome. From a spiritual point of view this is going to be the climax and high point of the physical lives of those to whom God offers this divine protection. This is going to be almost a continuous "Feast of Tabernacles."

In addition to supernaturally protecting and guiding his people to the place of safety, God is going to "nourish" (Rev. 12:14) his people. This nourishment certainly is both spiritual and physical.

This will be a time when God's people will have opportunity to be shut away from the world, to learn many new things about God's ways and His commands. It will be a time to grow spiritually. It will be a time of wonderful fellowship with God's own people.

Lesson You Must Learn Now

But, there are important lessons that we must learn now. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (high living), and drunkenness, and cares of this life and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). Many of you are overconcerned with the "high living" of our day. You have become overly concerned about the cares of this life, and have not put the Kingdom of God, and the work that God has given us to do, first in your life.

For such people the following warning is sounded:

"For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth' (verse 35).

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

Notice these things. The command is to watch and pray always! Our prayers should be in accord with the instructions that Jesus Christ gave in Matt. 6:9-13. With these instructions Jesus Christ gives us many things to pray about in addition to praying that we might be protected from the trials and temptations that are ahead. If we pray faithfully and with our whole heart in this manner, then we shall be accounted worthy to escape. Some have had the erroneous idea that they should be praying only to escape.

This scripture does not say to pray to escape only but that because we pray daily we can escape all of the things mentioned in this chapter and stand before the Son of man. That is the important point that many people have overlooked.

Many are looking forward to escape. They are not looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ.

For those who are not protected a remarkable and detailed prophecy is found in Deuteronomy 28, concerning the terrible siege and captivity that follows the escape of the Church. "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and want of all things; and he will put a yoke of iron upon your neck until he has destroyed you" (Deut. 28:47, 48 RSV).

Here is one reason why some of God's called and chosen

people will not go to safety. They are not serving God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. God has given us abundance in our nation such as the rest of the world has not had. Do we appreciate these things? Some of us do not! Instead of being appreciative, instead of being thankful and giving praise to God for this great abundance, we gripe and complain because others have more, or because we do not have what we would like to have, or what we think we should have.

This lack of appreciation for the wonderful spiritual and physical blessings of God will bar some from going to safety.

Our trials and temptations are small now. They are going to increase as Satan becomes more angry with God's Church. We must use the time well that God has given us to grow spiritually and to overcome the trials that lie ahead. The wonderful physical blessings that God has given us now are going to be taken away in a few years. Let's appreciate these blessings now, giving God thanks continually for supplying them for us. God wants us to enjoy these things to the full.

We must learn to pray daily, without intermission and with faith and fervency, believing God totally and completely. We must learn to overcome our own faults, to overcome Satan and the world about us.

But one final warning.

In I Cor. 10:1-13 we are told by the apostle Paul that all the things that happened to the children of Israel in ancient times were written down for our instruction and learning today. Are we learning these lessons? Or, are we right now making the same mistakes that they made. We must learn these lessons or else we will never escape the things that are coming on this earth.

Brethren, God is going to provide a way of escape for his people. It is going to be a hard, ruddy and difficult way. But, it will be a way of joy.

Will you be among those who will be protected and stand before Jesus Christ at His coming?

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



Continuing Church of God www.ccog.org
Daily Bible News Prophecy www.cogwriter.com

CCOG.ASIA This is a website focused on Asia. It has articles in Mandarin Chinese as well as some in English, plus some items in other Asian languages.

CCOG.EU This is a website targeted towards Europe. It has materials in many European languages.

CCOG.IN This is a website targeted towards those of Indian heritage, and includes materials in Hindi.

CCOG.NZ This is a website targeted towards those in New Zealand.

CCOGCanada.CA This is a website targeted towards those in Canada.

CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish language website for the Continuing Church of God.

PNIND.PH Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This is the Philippines oriented website with items in English and Tagalog.



BibleNewsProphecy channel
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The *Continuing Church of God* also uses printed and electronic magazines, books, and weekly letters to the brethren to also support Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20.

