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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

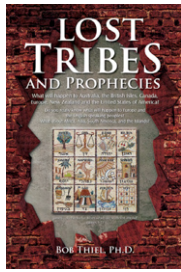
A knight in full plate armor, including a crown, is riding a white horse. The knight is holding a sword and looking forward. The horse is in motion, galloping. The background is a dark, misty landscape. The text '24 Things to Watch in 2024' is overlaid in a large, metallic, 3D font.

24 Things
to Watch
in 2024

Prophecies for 11
Tribes

Yes, You Can Have Real
Hope

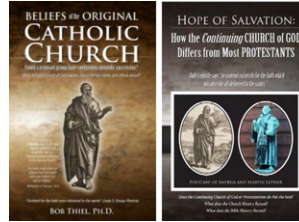
BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



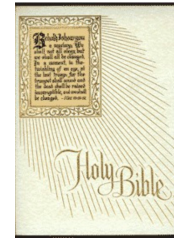
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11



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24

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About the Front Cover: Brian Thiel put this together using images from sources such as Public Domain, Pixabay and Pexels.com.

Back Cover: Internet and Radio This shows where people can find the messages from the *Continuing Church of God*.

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24 Things to Watch in 2024

Jesus said:

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming -- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning -- 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:32-37)

Jesus said to "Watch," and He meant to watch events that were consistent with what He pointed to earlier in that chapter.

Here are 24 things to watch in 2024 during this time, and prior to the start of the Great Tribulation:

1. Scoffing in the Last Days
2. Immorality Prophecies Being Fulfilled
3. Media, Internet, and Other Censorship
4. Weather Sorrows and Troubles
5. Earthquakes and Volcanoes
6. The White Horse of the Apocalypse
7. Strife and the Red Horse of War
8. Trade Issues
9. The Deal of Daniel 9:27
10. Knowledge Increasing
11. Debt
12. US Dollar Dominance will Decrease
13. CBDC and 666
14. Gold
15. Unrest, Terror, and the Dividing of the USA
16. Europe Will Work to Reorganize
17. Europe Will Have a Great Army and Many Ships
18. Steps Towards the Formation of the King of the South
19. The Time of the Gentiles will Lead to Armageddon
20. Jews Ready to Sacrifice

21. Inventions of evil things
22. Totalitarian Steps
23. Preparation for the Short Work
24. Fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20

Jesus also said:

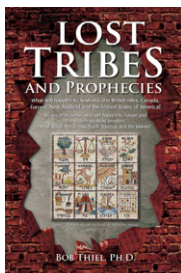
34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36)

Anyway, in our video and radio programs, as well as at COGwriter.com, we often highlight news items to watch.

But as Jesus said, we also are to do more than JUST watch and not be caught up with the ways of the world. We are also to pray — and we all should strive to improve so that we will be counted worthy to escape what is going to happen.

According to other words of Jesus (cf. Revelation 3), not all Christians will be accounted worthy (see also Revelation 12;14-17). But, if you at least watch and pray, and take proper action, and gather together early enough (cf. Zephaniah 2:1-3) with the Philadelphian remnant, you may be protected from the hour of trial that will affect the whole earth (Revelation 3:7-10).

Prophecies for 11 Tribes – Part I



By Bob Thiel

God promised Jacob the following:

14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 28:14)

Therefore, the tribes must have scattered and gone somewhere according to the Bible — and the New Testament confirms this (e.g., James 1:1).

How have various ones attempted to determine the locations and identities of the tribes of Israel?

The late evangelist Dibar Apartian, who stated to me that he was an “original Catholic Church of God Christian,” wrote:

The patriarch Jacob, just before his death, called his sons together to reveal to them what would become of their descendants in the course of time.

This key prophecy is found in Genesis, chapter 49. It is renewed later, with some additions, by the mouth of Moses, Deuteronomy 33. Without this prophecy, it would be impossible for us to determine the exact identity of each tribe, after its dispersion.

More than this, the Bible reveals to us that each of the twelve tribes have inherited the principal traits of character of the son of Israel whose name it bears. (Apartian D. The French-Speaking Peoples In Prophecy. 1961, 1967; translated into English by Carol Kalin in 1975)

The Bible has prophecies for each of the tribes of Israel. While this book is not intended to go into all the possible connections between them and modern nations, a few items will be mentioned to support the modern identification.

That being said, it is a fact that there has been intermarriage and migration which, in many cases, put the descendants of Israel as a minority in the nation they are identified with in this chapter.

The Bible shows that Moses gave prophetic blessings to the tribes:

1 Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. (Deuteronomy 33:1)

In this chapter, blessings and prophecies from scriptures will be quoted.

These prophecies help give clues as to the identities of the “ten lost tribes.” Although the speculated national identities are subject to controversy, and all the details pointing to those are not included in this book, the fates of many of the tribes in the 21st century are similar.

The twelve sons of Jacob form the basis for the twelve tribes of Israel. Listed in the order from oldest to youngest: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

This intended multi-part article is expected to touch on all those descendants.

Reuben and France

Jacob’s wife Leah bore her first son and named him Reuben (Genesis 29:32), meaning “see a son.”

To Reuben, Jacob said:

3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. 4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel, Because you went up to your father’s bed; Then you defiled it — He went up to my couch. (Genesis 49:3-4)

The “you shall not excel” comment would be consistent with France not truly leading the coming power in Europe. But it also has a reputation for excellence.

To Reuben, Moses said:

6 “Let Reuben live, and not die, *Nor* let his men be few.” (Deuteronomy 33:6)

Notice that the term *Nor* is in italics above, which means the translators are showing that they added it as it was not in the Hebrew text. The Roman Catholic DRB and Jewish JPS also confirm this passage as saying Reuben’s men would be few. So, Reuben was not prophesied to be the largest of the tribes.

The Jewish researcher Yair Davidiy wrote:

“REUBEN” in Hebrew connotes: “See-a son” i.e. REU (pronounced “roo”) - BEN. Reuben became prominent amongst the French who were dominated by the Ribuari and Rubi Franks and other groups named after clans of Reuben. ... A symbol of the Gauls was a cock and later France was represented by the sun. This is also a symbol of Reuben. The fleur-de-lis symbol of France is similar to the flower of the mandrake another symbol of Reuben. (Extracted from “The Tribes” by Yair Davidiy REUBEN; <http://britam.org/reuben.html> viewed 03/04/22)

Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 1040 1105, Champagne, France):

“The first exile of the children of Israel who were exiled from the Ten Tribes to the land of Canaanites unto Zarephath ... The exegetes say that Zarephath means the Kingdom called ‘France’ in common language.” (Davidiy Y. Commentary on the book of Obadiah. <http://britam.org/obadiah.html> accessed 11/17/22)

The Jewish sage Rashi commenting on Obadiah verse 20 stated that the ten tribes went as far as into Zarephath (Rashi on Obadiah in The twelve prophets: Hebrew text & English translation. Abraham Cohen, ed. Soncino Press, 1948), which various ones have said refers to France (Gill J. Gill’s Exposition of the

Entire Bible. John Gill, 1746-63; The Geneva Bible. 1560, p, 373; Isaac Arbarbanel Commentary on Obadiah 20. Sefaria.org accessed 11/17/22) and the 15th/16th century Jewish sage Isaac Arbarbanel also pointed to a connection to England (Isaac Arbarbanel Commentary on Obadiah 20. Sefaria.org). In the 16th century, early Protestants pointed to another word in Obadiah 20 as to also pointing to the land of the Dutch (Geneva Bible, p. 373). Thus, the idea of the tribes going to the north-west of Europe and even into the British Isles was noted many centuries ago.

In the 20th century, the late evangelist Herman Hoeh wrote:

Reuben, unstable as water and having the excellency of greatness, we have recognized as France. Southern France, settled by the descendants of Javan (the Greeks), is gentile. The ... country, ... is unstable, yet sets the styles for the world, has the form of real excellency, and has the same sex weakness as Reuben, is France. When rightly translated, Moses says: “Let Reuben live, and not die in that his men become few” (Deut. 33:6). ... No other country in all the world fits all these qualifications. And is it not significant that the very country at war with England around 1800 should be France (Reuben), who would lose the birthright in the Napoleonic war? (Hoeh H. Location of the Tribes of Israel. Herman L Hoeh © 1957)

The late evangelist Dibar Apartian wrote:

The history of the Gauls, in the eyes of the world, begins around the seventh century B.C. — but the fact is the Gauls existed long before this era! If their identity remains lost in history, it is because they carried before a different name: a Biblical Name.

As strange as it might seem, the history of the Gauls — this people who lived under the rulership of the Druids — begins at the same time as the history of Israel, and that, so the Bible tells us with great precision, begins with Abraham. ... The Gauls — the people of the Celtic race — are those who actually are the ancestors of the French nation. (Apartian D. The French-Speaking Peoples In Prophecy)

In the Bible we read:

1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; (Numbers 32:1)

Even to this day, descendants of Reuben have much cattle as France has about 18 million head of cattle according to Statista in 2022.

Although many in France have not descended from Reuben, and perhaps not even the majority, we see certain Reuben-like similarities to this day.

Simeon is Scattered

5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel. (Genesis 49:5-7)

Their deceptive cruelty is mentioned in Genesis 34:13-30 where they took deadly revenge. They both may have been the main brothers who wanted to kill Joseph (Genesis 37:17-20) as Joseph later imprisoned Simeon (Genesis 42:24).

Interestingly, Moses does not even mention Simeon in Deuteronomy 33 where he blesses 10 of the tribes.

Since Simeon was prophesied to be scattered, presumably his descendants are scattered among the different Israeli-dominated nations and likely Israel itself. Despite being scattered, God knows who his descendants are (cf. Amos 9:9; Ezekiel 34:11-12) and still includes Simeon as a tribe in Revelation 7:7.

Levi Also Scattered, But

Leah named her third son Levi (Genesis 29:34), meaning twine/to unite.

Jacob said that Levi would be scattered, but after the sons of Levi stood for God in Exodus 32:26-29, they were given the priesthood.

Here is Moses' blessing to Levi's descendants:

8 And of Levi he said: "Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, Whom You tested at Massah, And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah, 9 Who says of his father and mother, 'I have not seen them'; Nor did he acknowledge his brothers, Or know his own children; For they have observed Your word And kept Your covenant. 10 They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You, And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar. 11 Bless his substance, Lord, And accept the work of his hands; Strike the loins of those who rise against him, And of those who hate him, that they rise not again." (Deuteronomy 33:8-11)

And although Levi was scattered in Israel, many came back to be with Judah (2 Chronicles 11:13-16). The Thummim and Urim were part of the breastplate of judgement for the high priest (Exodus 28:30).

The descendants of Levi are currently mainly in the land of Israel or with the Jewish diaspora. Some are also apparently scattered among the Israelitish nations.

Judah and Israel

Leah named her fourth son Judah (Genesis 29:35), meaning "praise."

Jacob said:

8 "Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. (Genesis 49:8-10)

Despite hateful antisemitism, which we condemn, the Jewish people are often praised for their education and scientific accomplishments.

Before going further, note that there is a prophecy that those that persecute/harass the Jews will be cut off:

13 ... they that harass Judah shall be cut off
(Isaiah 11:13b, JPS)

Yes, there is coming a time of no antisemitism.

The scepter prophecy has to do with the promise of royalty. The Bible shows that King David was from the tribe of Judah, as was Jesus (Luke 3:23-33).

This is also consistent with the following:

2 ... Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler ... (1 Chronicles 5:2).

And the Ruler, Jesus, will be over all as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16). Hence, Jesus will prevail over all the brothers of Judah and everyone else.

Now, recall that the word Judah essentially means to praise. King David wrote more than half of the 150 psalms. The psalms are often focused on praising God. King Solomon, also of the tribe of Judah, wrote 1005 psalms (1 Kings 4:32). Two of Solomon’s psalms are in the Bible (Psalms 72 & 127). Therefore, much praising of God in the Bible came from descendants of Judah, as well as from some important rulers.

Moses proclaimed this blessing:

7 And this he said of Judah: “Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, And bring him to his people; Let his hands be sufficient for him, And may You be a help against his enemies.” (Deuteronomy 33:7)

Throughout history, Judah appears alternatively as a lion or as a lamb. On the one hand they have been able to fight hard and on the other hand they are able to take a lot of suffering and persist.

Many simply believe that the nation of Jews called Israel is ALL OF ISRAEL, along with Jews scattered around the world. As shown by other scriptures (e.g., Genesis 48:11,15-16,19-20; cf. 1 Chronicles 5:1-2), the name Israel was to be placed on the descendants of Joseph.

Yet, it was prophesied that most would call the Jews ‘Israel’:

1 Hear this, O house of Jacob, Who are called by the name of Israel, And have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah (Isaiah 48:1)

This has happened. In modern times Judah is referred to as Israel. Most people overlook the scriptures that teach that there are other tribes of Israel in other places (e.g. James 1:1).

Perhaps it should also be pointed out that the first place in the Bible where the word “Jews” occurs, the Jews are at war against ISRAEL (2 Kings 16:5-6). Hence all the tribes of Israel are not Jews. Let it also be noted that only one of the men or women of faith specifically listed in the 11th chapter of Hebrews was a Jew (David) — some preceded the birth of Judah, whereas others came from the tribes of Levi (Moses), Manasseh (Gideon), Barak (Naphtali), Samson (Dan), and Ephraim (Samuel).

Although many are scattered, many Jews live in the nation called Israel. There are also many immigrants into that land whose ancestors intermarried and do not look the same as those who are most of the tribe of Judah descent by ancestry.

Black Israelites?

As far as ancestry goes, ‘Black Israelite’ groups (and some others) have falsely asserted that the ancient Jews were mainly black Africans. Some groups have falsely asserted that the majority in the nation of Israel are not Jews based on various misunderstandings of scripture and/or migration histories.

Specifically, many claim that the real Jews, those that they claim are from the Tribe of Judah are “American Negroes” (Amanfo A. Making History: The Sephardi Jewish Orphans of Sao-Tome and the African-American Appropriation of their Story the African-American Appropriation of their Story Dissertation, Florida International University, March 26, 2019) — and that other Jews are not really Jews — while some others claim they are mainly blacks in various parts of Africa. That is not the case for many reasons.

Yet, this does not mean that there are no black Israelites or black Jews. Because of a mixed multitude

joining the Israelites when they left Egypt (Exodus 12:38), plus the fact that some Jews did move into parts of Africa and interbred, there are some black Jews. There are also some black Israelites from the other tribes for the same reason.

However, the majority of modern Israelites and Jews do not appear to be of the Negroid/African race nor were the original Israelites or Jews.

While there are many ways to prove that, perhaps one of the easiest for the descendants of Judah would be to notice two 1st century coins issued c. 71 A.D.

After General Titus conquered Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Roman Emperor Vespasian issued coins — the back side of two different ones show conquered Jews:



Titus on left, captured Jewish man on bottom right (CNG coins)



Vespasian on left, captured Jewish soldiers on right (CNG coins)

The captured men have traditionally Caucasoid/European, not Negroid/African, hair. The Latin inscription on the second coin is Iudea Capta which is translated into English as “Judaea Taken.” These coins are clear evidence that the bulk of the Jews of the first century were not black Africans.

Color photos related to the Jews and Scythians (which would have included other Israelite tribes) are shown on the back cover of this book.

More historical photographs, along with scriptural support, about the early physical appearance of the children of Israel can be found online at: <https://www.ccog.org/were-the-ancient-tribes-of-israel-black-was-jesus-black/>

www.ccog.org/were-the-ancient-tribes-of-israel-black-was-jesus-black/

Additional Judah Prophecies

As far as prophecies go, the Bible shows that at least part of Jerusalem, the City of David (cf. 2 Kings 9:28), will have great damage (Isaiah 22:6-9).

The Bible teaches that there will be daily sacrifices resumed in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11). Several groups in Israel, such as the Temple Institute and the Reconstituted Sanhedrin have been preparing for this. They have a high priest, a consecrated altar, and various instruments that they feel is needed for these sacrifices (Berkowitz AE. Revealing the Hidden: Special Hanukkah Dedication of Third Temple Altar. Breaking Israel News, December 10, 2018). While a building may be constructed, representatives of both those groups have told me personally that they do not need a massive temple to resume them, consistent with scripture (Ezra 3:6).

Sometime after the sacrifices are resumed, the Beast leader, known as the King of the North, will one day go into Israel, stop sacrifices, and establish an abomination in that land per Daniel 11:31.

Furthermore, the Bible reveals that Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah are also prophesied to turn on each other to some degree (Isaiah 9:21). It also shows that some from Ephraim (probably involving UK royalty) will attempt to make a deal with the Assyrians (King of the North power), but it will basically be of no avail (cf. Hosea 7:11-12, 9:3).

Dan, Ireland, the 144,000, and Idolatry

Rachel’s handmaid Bilnah bore Jacob a son named Dan, meaning “judge” (Genesis 30:4-6).

Jacob prophesied:

16 “Dan shall judge his people As one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, A viper by the path, That bites the horse’s heels So that its rider shall fall backward. 18 I have waited for your salvation, O LORD! (Genesis 49:16-18)

Moses prophesied:

22 And of Dan he said: “Dan is a lion’s whelp; He shall leap from Bashan.” (Deuteronomy 33:22)

In the Old Testament, the tribe of Dan was noted for renaming locations with the word Dan (e.g. Joshua 19:47; Judges 18:11-12). This is believed by some to have ultimately resulted in the name Denmark (with perhaps some staying there and many others simply passing through). Other Danites are believed to have come to Ireland — some of the Irish refer to “Donn” as their progenitor.

As far as Ireland goes, notice the following:

The legendary account of the origin of the Gaels and their coming to Ireland is as follows: They came first out of that vast undefined tract, called Scythia — a region which probably included all of Southwest Europe and adjoining portions of Asia. ... They were called Gaedhal (Gael) because their remote ancestor, in the days of Moses, was Gaodhal Glas. (MacManus S. The Story of the Irish Race, A Popular History of Ireland. Irish Publishing Company, 1921, p. 8)

The above (from no later than the 11th century) is consistent with the Irish coming from some Israelite tribe — the connection to Moses for Goídel Glas comes from the legendary Lebor Gabála (Book of Invasions — Goídel Glas. Oxford Reference. Oxford University Press. Oxford University Press Copyright © 2022).

Some believe:

Another branch of the tribe of Dan which remained “in ships” (Judges, v. 17) made its appearance in Ireland under the title of “Tuatha-da-Danan.” Tephí, a descendant of the royal house of David, arrived in Ireland, according to the native annals, in 580 B.C. From her was descended Feargus More, king of Argyll, an ancestor of Queen Victoria, who thus fulfilled the prophecy that “the line of David shall rule for ever and ever” (II Chron. xiii. 5, xxi. 7). The Irish branch of the Danites brought with them Jacob’s stone, which has always been used as the coronation-stone of the kings of Scotland and England ... The land of Arzareth, to which the Israelites were transplanted (II Esd. xiii. 45), is identified with Ireland by dividing the former name into two parts, the former of which is ezez, or “land”; the latter, Ar, or “Ire.” (Jacobs,

p. 601)

That being said, the late Dr. Herman Hoeh put out the following in 1957:

Dan was originally divided into two parts, one about Joppa, a seaport, and the other in the north of Palestine. Dan refused to fight along side the other tribes against the Gentiles (Judges 5:17). Dan would judge, or stand up to rule, his own people as one of the separate tribes of Israel indicating he would gain self-government in the following manner: “Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the part, that biteth the horse’s heels, so that his rider falleth, backward.” Ireland has done just that to England. In fact, the symbol of the illegal Irish Republican Army was the coiled snake!

Dan would also be like a young lion leaping forth, an apt description of Denmark, which acquired the Virgin Islands, Greenland, Iceland and other islands in her heyday. Especially unique is the fact that of all the tribes Northern Dan still preserves their father’s name the Danes! (Hoeh H. Location of the Tribes of Israel. Herman L Hoeh © 1957)

Raymond McNair asserted:

All early histories of Ireland mention a people coming into Ireland called TUATHA DE DAN, which means “tribe of Dan.” (McNair, p. 110)

Those of Tuatha de Danan reportedly “settled primarily in Southern Ireland” (Your Bible Questions Answered. Good News, November 1963).

There are also various claims that some descendants from one or more called Jair from the tribe of Manasseh (Deuteronomy 3:14; 1 Kings 4:13) ended up traveling with Danites to Ireland (e.g. Mowatt D. Origin of Mankind. LifeRich Publishing, 2021). If that is so, it may be that many who migrated to the USA in the 19th century because of the Great Potato Famine in Ireland, including those from Ulster, could actually be Manassites. The relatively high percentage of USA residents that look to have descent from Ireland (9-15%) may add credence to those claims.

In the New Testament, God has an angel set a seal of protection on 12,000 people from each of twelve of the thirteen tribes of Israel:

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; 6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; 7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; 8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed. (Revelation 7:4-8).

Note: The term 'Joseph' is used for the tribe of Ephraim above (see also Ezekiel 37:16). Note also that the tribe of Dan is not in the above list.

Those 144,000 people descended from the tribes of Jacob get a special protection:

3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Revelation 9:3-4)

These look to be those people who descend from the tribes that will respond to God's messages during the 3½ year period of the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord. These New Testament passages show that God still knows the identities of the descendants of the tribes of Israel.

Those of Dan, as well as those not of the sealed 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, are not promised that protection. Thus, they would be completely subject to plagues of vegetation, fire, and the seas

(Revelation 9:4) and deaths associated with like (cf. Revelation 9:18).

Some have asserted that Dan's 'disqualification' from protection may be because of idolatry (cf. Deuteronomy 29:14-20) and/or other sinful reasons on the part of the Danites (e.g. Judges 18:14-30). End-time Danites may be more steeped in aspects of idolatry today than the other tribes which are perhaps more lackadaisical about it.

Another possibility Dan is not included is because of he is called a serpent (as Satan is called in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2) and a viper that causes a rider to fall backward (Genesis 49:17). This could point to end-time Danites may be among the more adamant misidentifying Jesus at His return (cf. Revelation 11:15) and/or perhaps supporting the Satanic Beast power longer (Revelation 19:15-21) than the other tribes will. However, these ideas are speculative as scripture does not specifically state why.

GotQuestions.org, a Protestant site, has the following wrong answer:

Dan ... by Ezra's time, it had been totally wiped out. This would explain why Dan is not listed among the tribes ... in Revelation 7. (Why is the tribe of Dan missing from the 144,000 in Revelation chapter 7? Got Questions. <https://www.gotquestions.org/tribe-Dan-missing-144000.html> accessed 11/08/22)

That idea is not possible because the 48th chapter of the Book of Ezekiel prophesies about the borders of the tribe of Dan during the coming millennium, as well as those of the other 12 tribes — this shows that its existence was not totally wiped out.

That said, remember that ONLY 12,000 of each of the other twelve tribes are promised protection out of the millions of end time descendants — it just may be since major deception will come on the world in the end time per 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, that Dan does not have anywhere close to 12,000 who will not be deceived.

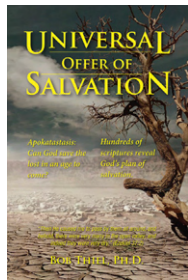
Furthermore, it should be noted that it is not just the 144,000 who are subject to being saved around that time:

The 144,000, as well as the great innumerable multitude from all nations referred to in {Revelation 7:} verse 9, repent of their old sinful ways and turn to Almighty God in personal surrender. (Lesson 28 — Feast of Trumpets — Why World Won't End in Cosmocide. The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1984)

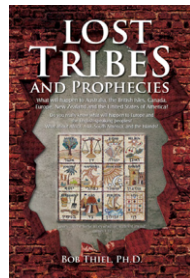
The first two verses after mentioning the 144,000 show that a “great multitude” will attain salvation (Revelation 7:9-10) — that may well include some Danites.

The remaining tribes are intended to be covered in future editions of this magazine.

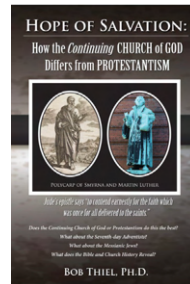
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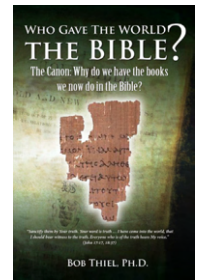
Universal Offer of Salvation



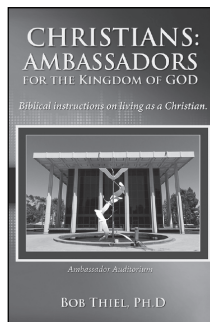
Lost Tribes and Prophecies



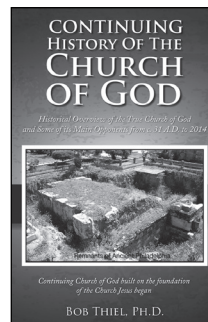
HOPE OF SALVATION:



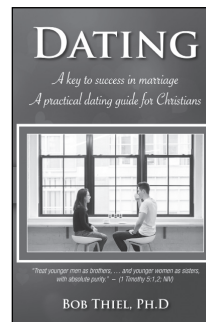
Who Gave The World The Bible?



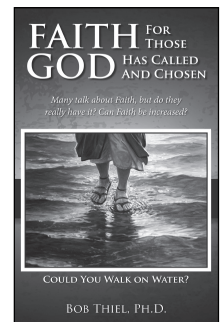
Christians: AMBASSADORS



Continuing History of the Church of God



Dating: A Key to Success in Marriage



Faith for Those God has Called and Chosen

Yes, YOU Can Have Real Hope



(Pixabay photo)

By Bob Thiel

Hope is one of the strongest and most powerful emotions.

Hope is stronger than fear and other tools that Satan and his followers on the earth employ (cf. Ephesians 6:11-17; 1 John 4:18).

The Apostle Paul wrote:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we ourselves boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also boast in tribulations, realizing that tribulation brings forth endurance, 4 And endurance brings forth character, and character brings forth hope. 5 And the hope of God never makes us ashamed because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us. (Romans 5:1-5, AFV)

5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. (Galatians 5:5-6, NKJV throughout unless otherwise specified)

8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

So, the Apostle Paul frequently tied faith and love in with hope.

How can you be more hopeful?

Well, one way is to truly have faith that God is real, God is love, and His word is true.

While there are often headlines in the news that are discouraging, as well as tests and trials we personally face, we who have read the Bible need to always realize that according to Jesus, if we endure to the end, we will win (cf. Matthew 10:24).

Don't be negative. Have a positive shift in your attitude. Don't let outside circumstances make you gloomy. Remember we are to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

We are not to be sorrowful like those that have no real hope (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Thus, we should have what some have called an "optimism bias." When we arise each day, we should not dread it, but look forward with hope to the opportunity to give and grow in character, grace, love, and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 2:19-22; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Romans 5:1-5):

147 I rise before the dawning of the morning,
And cry for help; I hope in Your word. (Psalm 119:147)

We should not be discouraged but ask God for help while we hope in His word.

We all need to understand that we can change our lives at any point. We are able through Jesus to repent of various sins and bad habits (1 Corinthians 10:13). The Bible says we "can do all things through Christ who strengthens" (Philippians 4:13) us.

Yes, YOU can change.

Christians are supposed to have hope. The NKJV has the word "hope" 68 times in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul mentioned hope 6 times in the following:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of

God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (Romans 8:18-25)

For many, pessimism is not just a passing inclination, but a near-constant outlook shaped by difficult, maybe brutal events and circumstance. Yet, the Bible shows that even negative events can end up having positive effects:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:28-33)

Yes, we should look for meaning even in difficult situations. Nothing from this world can overcome the power of God.

The Apostle Paul also wrote:

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-38)

The world cannot overpower you spiritually if you will not let it. Have real hope.

As far as problems you may encounter go, the Apostle James wrote:

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:2-8)

Yes, faith and hope are tied together. So, also is love:

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Notice that hope is given equal rank with faith, and nearly as high as love. Hope stands as one of the most important gifts, to be sought after and utilized by every one of God's people.

The Book of Hebrews teaches:

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.”

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; (Hebrews 12:3-16)

We are not to accept discouragement, but learn from the tests, trials, and chastening that we go through — even when we do not understand it.

If you truly love God and have real faith in Him, not only that He exists, but that He is faithful (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:9), you will have real hope.

Hope is so important that the old KJV declares, “We are saved by hope” (Romans 8:24).

To hope means to look forward to with the faith and confidence of fulfillment, to expect with desire something positive.

What is Hope?

A lot of people think that hope is simply wishful thinking. When many say, “Let’s hope for the best” they really are concerned that circumstances will not

turn out that way.

Wishful thinking is not hope.

Nor is hope watered down faith.

To have biblical hope means to look forward to something with confidence that it will be fulfilled.

True Christian hope is positive and assured. Hope allows us to see past outside circumstances beyond our immediate tests, trials, and problems.

Proper biblical hope sees God’s plan at work. We all should know that God is working with us to produce godly character so we can rule with Him in His coming fantastic kingdom.

A hope-filled Christian has zeal and a purpose. The hopeful are alive with spiritual energy to keep overcoming and growing no matter what problems and influences are at work to discourage and frustrate their progress toward God’s Kingdom.

As Christians, we are to fight a lifelong spiritual battle against sin. Remember:

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:6-10)

Yes, Satan the devil wants you to fail. Just like lions do not only eat once, Satan is also going to try multiple times to get to you.

It has been said that Satan often hits us hardest where we are weakest.

But, with the help of Jesus, which we can get through His Holy Spirit, “we are more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37).

Of course, sometimes, we do not do so well.

Even the Apostle Paul was frustrated by his own personal failure to measure up to the goal of spiritual perfection that is in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote:

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:18-25)

Yes, even an apostle needs to rely on Jesus and not just himself.

We have all felt overwhelmed at times by physical pulls, thoughts and attitudes that are contrary to God's law of love. We have all sinned (Romans 3:23) and succumbed to Satan's pull.

Now, several of the concepts in this article were in an article last century, put out by the old Worldwide Church of God. Here are some specific quotes from that to consider:

As long as we live, the battle against sin rages. It is our mortal enemy. Toward the end of his long life and ministry, the apostle John instructed, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). ...

A Christian must completely repent of past sins, surrender to God, be baptized in water and by the laying on of hands by God's true ministers receive the Holy Spirit.

Once begotten by God's Spirit, the Christian

begins a life dedicated to growth and overcoming, developing God's character. Here lies our hope for the future. Paul tells us, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13).

This is God's promise to us!

God the Father places His Holy Spirit in the mind of each newly converted believer to grant him power over sin, in order that He may develop His own character in us. Jesus Christ, our Savior, paid the penalty of death because of sin for us so we might be born into the God Family and receive everlasting life at His Second Coming (Romans 6:23).

This is the very purpose for our being alive, and the foundation of our hope for the future! "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). No Christian is yet born into God's Family, but is an heir, an inheritor of the promise. True Christians are part of the firstfruits of God's Family, to be born when Jesus Christ returns.

What will it take for you to be a part of this glorious future hope? More, perhaps, than anything else the realization that God earnestly intends and desires that you be in His Kingdom. God wants it for you (1 Peter 1:3-5)! (Lichtenstein JP. What the World Needs Now Is Hope. Good News, October-November 1984)

Yes, we have a glorious hope for the future!

Yet, many have feared losing salvation because of inability to root sin completely from their lives. Although the thought of sin is abhorrent, its pull on our flesh is strong.

But, if we do not give up, we will be saved (Mark 13:13).

Remember that the Apostle Paul also wrote:

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (Philippians 1:4)

Yes, we can have confident hope that Jesus will not give up on us, despise our faults and sins.

Return to the Word of God

Does your discouragement stem from being knocked down one too many times by those of this world?

Try to identify the thing or things in this world that you love more than you love yourself, which Jesus said should be God (Matthew 22:37). His Word should be your hope and inspiration (Psalm 119:147; 2 Timothy 3:16).

For Christians, that leads us to the love of God and seeking His Kingdom.

As Jesus taught:

37 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'
38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-39)

Jesus also taught not to worry:

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?
28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:25-34)

Jesus not only said not to worry, but also to take things one day at a time.

The great hope for humanity is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

Many of God's people, even though they realize God's Kingdom will be set up on earth and they desire to be a part of it, nevertheless despair of receiving eternal life. They are overcome by fear and self-doubt.

These hopeless attitudes come from Satan and his demons, who know the Kingdom is coming and have no hope. Satan wants you to be discouraged.

Why?

Because the truly discouraged will not be in the Kingdom of God!

Notice:

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:7-8)

The cowardly and unbelieving do not have hope. But Christians need to have that as that helps us to overcome so that after the resurrection, we can inherit all things.

Also remember that this physical life is fleeting:

9 Enjoy life ... all the days of the fleeting life that God has given you under the sun — all your fleeting days. (Ecclesiastes 9:9, Berean Study Bible)

For a Christian, facing the reality that this life is temporal and that we have the hope of the

resurrection and Jesus' return should comfort us:

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The time coming will be fantastic. We can have hope and comfort other believers.

How fantastic will the time coming be?

The Apostle John was inspired to record:

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)

The Apostle Paul reported that it was so fantastic, it was somewhat indescribable:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written:

"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."

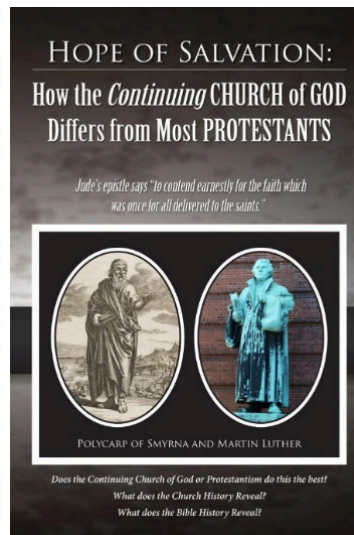
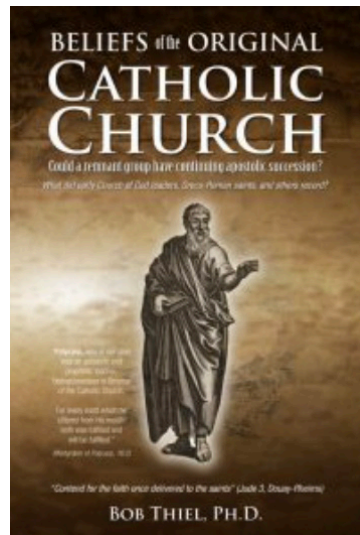
10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:7-12)

Yes, it will be beyond normal comprehension.

And yes, YOU can have real hope in God's loving plan for you.

For more on God's plan for you, check out our free book, online at ccog.org: The MYSTERY of GOD'S PLAN: Why Did God Create Anything? Why did God make you?

“CHURCH FATHERS”— Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestant — CONDEMN ALL WARFARE!



Editor's note: I wrote the above scriptural-filled books to demonstrate that the Greco-Roman Catholics and the Protestants do not hold to many of the teachings of the early Christians. Both books also extensively quote from those writers known as "Church fathers." Some do not realize that true Christians have pointed to these writers throughout history to demonstrate that the true Christian faith is not like the modern Greco-Roman Catholic or Protestant faiths. The following was written by Leroy Neff of the old Radio Church of God in May 1963 (and hence is in the public domain and can be used in this magazine). It was part of a multi-part series and the following is one installment in that series:

Consistent quotes from historic records prove irrevocably that even early Catholic doctrine forbade bloodshed. This doctrine was still preached and practiced as late as the fourth century. Read this startling proof from the pens of professing Christians' own authorities!

Most Churches today take for granted the belief that good Christians should fight for their country! ...

A Leading Roman Catholic priest and former dean of Catholic University, Washington, D.C., summarized this common belief in a speech delivered in Baltimore, Maryland, April 17, 1961. "A soldier may kill in time of war, but for him to kill in the spirit of hatred is not the proper Christian attitude." He further stated that: "Catholics MAY NOT justifiably become pacifists or conscientious objectors."

A pacifist is a person who believes in establishing or maintaining peace among nations without recourse to war. A conscientious objector is a person who cannot for the sake of conscience fight for his country.

Is it really wrong, as this theologian states, for a Christian to become a pacifist or a conscientious objector? We have seen in the Bible by the practices and teachings of Christ and the Apostles that it would be WRONG to be anything else! But, the churches today teach differently!

This minister continued: "War is not intrinsically evil, according to Catholic doctrine, but for a nation to embark on a course of war certain conditions must be met."

What Are Conditions for War?

"The first condition," he said, "requires that there be sufficient REASON for a country to engage in war."

What reasons justify WAR? "The only just war is one of DEFENSE and there is never sufficient moral reason for aggression. Other conditions demand that those who declare war must be morally certain they are right and that the results expected overbalance the evil caused by the conflict! Before a nation enters a

war, it must have exhausted all avenues leading to a possible peaceful solution. A soldier also must comply with a condition - that he does not bear hatred for the enemy in his heart. 'No man may take another's life without authorization from GOD,' Connell said, 'and every government receives its authority from Him.'"

This church spokesman states that God gives each country the authority to make war on another country. If so, then God also gives the same right to the enemy nation. This right is then given to the soldier who goes out to kill the enemy soldier who also has the same "God-given" right to kill.

Such false reasoning gives men the idea today that God approves all the slaughter and killing in modern war. This is representative of the teachings of most churches today-as will be proved in a later installment.

Did the church start this way? Has this always been the teaching of the church? Let's see the historical record of what church leaders taught during the first few centuries.

In the last chapter we saw time after time how Jesus Christ and the original true Apostles taught exactly opposite to the clergyman just quoted. The Apostles practiced the very same things that Christ practiced. The true Church followed His personal instructions and escaped to safety prior to the terrible siege and destruction of A.D. 70.

How Can Man Kill in Love?

Pastor Connell stated that a soldier must NOT kill in hatred! How can a soldier KILL IN LOVE?

Jesus said: "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5 :44). To love is to give of the self, in service and in devotion to others, not to KILL!

Killing is not giving, it is taking. It is not showing love to neighbor. If killing is an expression of love, then the soldier ought to let the enemy kill him instead of killing the enemy!

This same minister states that it is WRONG to become a pacifist, or a conscientious objector. Is it wrong to be PEACEFUL? (That is what pacifism means). Paul said, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify

another." (Rom. 14:19). This man says that it is wrong to have a conscience which will not permit you to kill other human beings in mortal combat.

These teachings are NOT the same as those of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, and throughout your New Testament!

Pastor Connell states that defensive war is permissible. Jesus and the true Apostles did NOT defend themselves! They did not teach ANYONE, nor any country, to defend itself! Nor did they teach Christians to take vengeance on invaders. They said that we are not to take vengeance, because God will take vengeance for us (Romans 12:19)!

Is the STATE Licensed to Sin?

God says the natural heart — "the conscience" — will deceive us and lead us to eternal death! (Jeremiah 17:9 and Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

The false teaching of many religious leaders is that nations have been given the authorization from God to wage war. The nation in turn has authority from God to force a citizen to take up arms against a citizen of another country. The citizen may then be hired to kill other human beings.

Has Almighty God given nations authority to cause Christians in one country to slay Christians in another country? Christian against Christian, brother against brother, race against race? This is confusion. It is BABYLON.

IT IS WRONG!

It did not come from the Bible. It did not come from the teachings of Jesus Christ. It did not even come from the original leaders of the Catholic Church!

What has led to this "ABOUT FACE" from the simple and plain teaching of Christ? What did happen, when did it happen, and who did it? ...

History Continues in the Bible

The book of Revelation was inspired by the same Jesus Christ who personally gave teachings against fighting and killing. It is HIS revelation (Revelation 1:1). It tells us some of the things that were taking place then,

and those things which were going to happen very quickly.

Did Jesus Christ preach the same message through John in this book as He personally taught His disciples many years earlier?

The things prophesied to “shortly come to pass” begin in chapters two and three. Here is an account of the seven eras of God’s Church from A.D. 31 to Christ’s return. The first period was the Ephesian era. This era was one which would require much patience because of the terrible times of deception and trial.

The Smyrna period of God’s Church was one of extreme tribulation. It was one in which true Christians were imprisoned, and many died. They were exhorted to be faithful even unto death (verse 10). Here is an example of where God’s people were persecuted to death. They did not love their lives, even unto death. THEY DID NOT TAKE UP ARMS — arms were taken up against them — they were SLAUGHTERED for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They did not believe nor practice participation in war and fighting, even to save their own lives!

Christ knew that there would be an increasing number of wars, the climax would come at the close of this age, with world wars (Revelation 6:4). These many martyred Christians of all times are symbolically seen under the altar (Revelation 6:9).

Conditions in this end time are prophesied to become so bad that God’s Church will have to flee into an uninhabited wilderness or desert for 1260 literal days (Revelation 12:13-17).

These scriptures, inspired by the living Christ, and written by John, have shown TRUE CHRISTIANS not to fight in any of the wars of the past 2000 years!

The false church system described in Revelation 17 and 18 is pictured as one which is drunk on the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:6). Here is a false church which takes advantage of and kills those who OBEY God. For these crimes against God’s people, in the name of religion, God will bring terrible judgment and vengeance on this counterfeit and deceitful system! (Revelation 18:20-24).

These scriptures in Revelation are plain in showing that these false “Christians” would take advantage of the true Christians in EVERY possible way. The real Christians would be like Christ, as LAMBS led to the slaughter, and as sheep in the midst of WOLVES. Not having natural or physical protection, they can rely only on God for His help and ultimate escape from evil men who desire to kill and exterminate them in any way possible.

The teachings of the book of Revelation are not contrary to the other teachings of Jesus Christ. He did not speak differently in the book of Revelation, 96 A.D., from 65 years earlier when He was in the flesh.

He did not speak differently during this same time through the Apostle Jude. Jude exhorted those who were falling away to get back to the faith ONCE DELIVERED to the saints (Jude 3). Getting back to the original faith includes Christ’s teaching about war!

Secular History Shows Changes

When did the “about face” in teaching occur? We have now seen that it did not occur prior to A.D. 96. And yet, there was a great change shortly after this time. Two historical writers have particularly noted a remarkable, unmistakable, and definite change.

“For fifty years after St. Paul’s life a curtain hangs over the Church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writing of the earliest church fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul.” (The Story of the Christian Church, Hurlbut, page 41)

This same period is called by some scholars the “Age of Shadows.” Others have aptly called it the “Lost Century.”

The famed historian Edward Gibbon also referred to this period in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. “The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the Church” (Chapter XV).

When this cloud over the first age of the Church is removed, what will we find being taught regarding Christian participation in warfare? Will it be drastically changed as other doctrines were, or will it continue the same as under the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles?

WARFARE Teaching Didn't Change

To find the answer we must examine the writings of the Catholic Church leaders of the period.

Justin Martyr is known as one of the first and most important church leaders and writers. He is acknowledged as one of the "church fathers" by Catholic and Protestant alike. This famous man lived in the period of 100 to 167 A.D. He has been termed "one of the ablest men of his time" (Halley's Bible Handbook, page 674). He died a martyr at Rome. This church leader left considerable writings which have been preserved. Here is his personal comment about Christians and warfare.

"And we who formerly used to murder do not only refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also, that we may not lie nor deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ" (from Apology I, page 39).

He spoke for those of his religion, who in his day did not participate in warfare of any kind. Instead of persecuting those of contrary religious or political belief, these people WERE the PERSECUTED. They would NOT take part in war and even in the case of "examination" — torture — they would not lie, nor would they even cause harm to come to others.

Here is just one source of proof that shows the people who professed Christ in His day were STILL FOLLOWING the teachings about fighting as given by Christ and continued by the Apostles. There is no great change here from the beliefs and practices of the Church of God during the time of the Apostles. The great change in belief regarding participating in war had not yet come!

More Proof from History

The second writer of this era whom we wish to examine is Irenaeus, who lived from about 130 to 200

A.D. He was a teacher of the Church in the school of Asia Minor. He traveled widely, wrote several books, and later became bishop of Lyons, France. Here are his comments about Christians of his day, taken from the books, Irenaeus Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter XXXIV, section 4:

"These [Christians] did form the swords and war lances into ploughshares, and changed them into pruninghooks for reaping the corn [that is], into instruments used for peaceful purposes, and that they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek."

Certainly, these teachings are plain and to the point! They are not at all like the common Protestant and Catholic teachings of today.

Tertullian was another prominent leader who lived about this time. He was one of the two most noted men of the famed church school at Carthage in North Africa. As a result, he did much to shape theological thought in Europe. He is called the "Father of Latin Christianity," and lived from about 160 to 220 A.D. He was very explicit in his teachings and writings on this subject:

"Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain, and the prison and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?" (from De Corona, Chapter XI)

He uses similar words in another book to show that the COMMON teaching of this time prohibited Christians from taking any part in war.

"But how will a Christian man war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away?" (from De Idolatria, Chapter XIX)

The statement of Jesus in Matthew 26:52 was well-understood by these men who knew that warfare

and fighting was strictly and completely forbidden by the plain words of Christ and the Apostles.

Here is an even more remarkable excerpt from his teachings. Certainly, such shocking teaching would be completely unacceptable in most of the popular and large churches today!

“If we are enjoined, then, to love our enemies, as I have remarked above, whom have we to hate? If injured, we are forbidden to retaliate, lest we become as bad ourselves: who can suffer injury at our hands ... For what wars should we not be fit, not eager, even with unequal forces, we who so willingly yield ourselves to the sword, if in our religion it were not counted better to be slain than to slay. Without arms even, and raising no insurrectionary banner. ... “ (from Apology, Chapter XXXVII)

Multitudes of Christians Would Not Fight

These teachings were not limited to just a few Christian converts, or to a small portion of those who considered themselves to be Christians. These instructions came from the most prominent church leaders and clergymen of that day. They were accepted and practiced by the whole Catholic Church at that time! There is no need to be in doubt! To make it very clear how widespread this teaching was and how it was then accepted by the whole Church it is necessary to continue from the text last quoted:

“For if such multitudes of men were to break away from you (Caesar), and betake themselves to some remote corner of the world, why, the very loss of so many citizens, whatever sort they were, would cover the empire with shame; nay in the very forsaking, vengeance would be inflicted ... you would have more enemies than citizens remaining. For it is the immense number of Christians which makes your enemies so few-almost all the inhabitants of your various cities being followers of Christ.” (from Apology, Chapter XXXVII)

The people of the Greco-Roman Church accepted

and practiced these teachings in such great numbers that if they would leave the Roman Empire, Caesar would have few citizens left. The professing and real Christians were not his enemies. They did not take up arms against him or for him. He would have everything to gain and nothing to lose, to keep this VAST number of people from leaving the empire, even though they would not fight or support him in his wars.

How different are the beliefs and practices today! Most who now profess the name of Christ almost TOTALLY accept the perverted teachings that a Christian should fight for his country. In the beginning ages of the Church, the people would not fight. They knew without a doubt that it was totally wrong!

These teachings were not done in a corner. Everyone embracing the faith knew about it. We have seen the proof of history. Most good public libraries have these very same comments recorded in such volumes as the Ante-Nicene Fathers, from which these quotations have been taken.

Another very famous scholar and church leader of this period was Origen. Here is a brief summary from Halley’s Bible Handbook about this man:

“ORIGEN. 185-254. The most LEARNED man of the ancient Church. A great traveler; and a voluminous writer, employing at times as many as twenty copyists. Two thirds of the New Testament is quoted in his writings. He lived in Alexandria, where his father, Leonidas, suffered martyrdom; later, in Palestine, where he died as a result of imprisonment and torture under Decius.” (Page 675)

Here is what he wrote and taught concerning the question of a Christian fighting. Notice the kind of fighting he did:

“And none fight better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he requires it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army-an army of piety-by offering our prayers to God.” (Contra Celsum, Chapter VIII, page 73)

Origen explains this subject more fully in this same work as follows:

“We are come, agreeably to the counsels of Jesus to ‘cut down our hostile and insolent wordy swords into plowshares, and to convert into pruninghooks the spears formerly employed in war.’ For we NO LONGER take up ‘sword against nation,’ · nor do we ‘learn war anymore,’ having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of those whom our fathers followed among whom we were ‘strangers to the covenant.’” (Contra Celsum, Chapter V, page 33)

Before conversion the people of this time believed in fighting. Afterwards, they knew it was wrong and contrary to their religion. They sought peace without warring and fighting.

Cyprian was another very famous church leader of this same period and time. He was the other leader of the famous school at Carthage, North Africa, who was mentioned earlier in connection with Tertullian. He was a bishop at this church school and has been referred to as “one of the great writers and church leaders of the period” (Story of the Christian Church, Hurlbut, page 56). He was martyred in 257 by the Roman Emperor Valerian. Here are his comments about warfare:

“The whole world is wet with mutual blood, and murder, which in the case of an individual is admitted to be a crime, is called a virtue when it is committed wholesale. Impunity is claimed for the wicked deeds, not on the plea that they are guiltless, but because the cruelty is perpetrated on a grand scale.” (Epistles, Chapter I, page 6)

The last writer to be mentioned from this period is Lactantius. He lived until the time of Constantine. His writings show very plainly that the church was still teaching that Christians were not to fight — at least until the time of Constantine:

“But we on the contrary do not require that anyone should be compelled, whether he is willing or unwilling, to worship our God, who is the God of all men; nor are we angry if anyone does not worship Him. For we trust in the majesty of Him who has power to avenge contempt shown towards Himself as, also he

has power to avenge the calamities and injuries inflicted on His servants, and therefore, when we suffer such impious things, WE DO NOT RESIST even in word; but we remit vengeance to God.” (The Divine Institutes, Book V, Chapter 21)

This same author covers the subject of military service and killing more specifically in the following excerpt from Book VI:

“For when God forbids us to kill, he not only prohibits us from open violence, which is not even allowed by the public laws, but he warns us against the commission of those things which are esteemed lawful among men. Thus, it will be neither lawful for a just man to engage in warfare ...” (The Divine Institutes, Book VI, Chapter 20)

The belief of the Church during this time was so ingrained that: “Maximilian and a number of others in the second century actually suffered martyrdom for refusing, on Gospel principles to BEAR ARMS” (War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ, by David Low Dodge, page 117).

How different this is from the teachings of the present generation of churches! Protestant and Catholics alike trace their churches through these very writers and church leaders. These are written teachings of that time, preserved for the present. They show plainly that something has happened to cause professing “Christians” TODAY to have exactly opposite teachings.

A startling TRANSFORMATION has occurred since that time! The next installment will show how that remarkable change came, and who caused it! (To be continued in part 2).

EDITOR’S NOTE: As far as “early Church Fathers” go, there were a few that Leroy Neff did not include above that we will show here. They are all considered to have been saints and “early Church Fathers” by the Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestants, yet, they also look to have been true Church of God Christians.

For example, Melito of Sardis, a leading Church of God Christian leader wrote around 170 A.D., that if a

leader is just, then God provides peace:

My opinion is this: that in `this' way a kingdom may be governed in peace — when the sovereign is acquainted with the God of truth, and is withheld by fear of Him from doing wrong to those who are his subjects, and judges everything with equity, as one who knows that he himself also will be judged before God; while, at the same time, those who are under his rule are withheld by the fear of God from doing wrong to their sovereign, and are restrained by the same fear from doing wrong to one another. By this knowledge of God and fear of Him all evil may be removed from the realm. For, if the sovereign abstain from doing wrong to those who are under his rule, and they abstain from doing wrong to him and to each other, it is evident that the whole country will dwell in peace. Many blessings, too, will be enjoyed there, because amongst them all the name of God will be glorified. For what blessing is greater than this, that a sovereign should deliver the people that are under his rule from error, and by this good deed render himself pleasing to God? For from error arise all those evils from which kingdoms suffer; but the greatest of all errors is this: when a man is ignorant of God, and in God's stead worships that which is not God. (Melito. Translation by Roberts and Donaldson. A DISCOURSE WHICH WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF ANTONINUS CAESAR, AND HE EXHORTED THE SAID CAESAR TO ACQUAINT HIMSELF WITH GOD, AND SHOWED TO HIM THE WAY OF TRUTH)

The above is consistent with admonitions from the Apostle Paul to pray for our physical leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2) as opposed to trying on our own and taking matters in our own hands.

Now, here is something from Theophilus of Antioch (who looks to have been part of the Church of God) perhaps written about 180 A.D.:

Consider, therefore, whether those who teach such things can possibly live indifferently, and be commingled in unlawful intercourse, or, most impious of all, eat human flesh, especially

when we are forbidden so much as to witness shows of gladiators, lest we become partakers and abettors of murders. But neither may we see the other spectacles, lest our eyes and ears be defiled, participating in the utterances there sung. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book III, Chapter XV. Translated by Marcus Dods, A.M. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2)

So, true Christians did not believe that they were to fight nor even watch the violent sports that were popular in the second century. This anti-violent sports stance was also the position of the Roman Catholic bishop Hippolytus in the early 3rd century, who also wrote against Christians being in the military (La Tradition Apostolique. Sources Chretiennes, 11 bis. Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1984) and of Gregory Dix (The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr. London: Alban Press, 1992).

Furthermore, around 250 A.D., Church of God elder/presbyter Pionius of Smyrna asked:

To whom have we done wrong? Have we perchance murdered someone? Or, do we persecute anyone? Or have we obliged anyone to venerate idols? (Martyrdom of Pionius as translated in Monroy, Mauricio Saavedra. The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community. Peter Lang edition, 2015, p. 155)

Pionius asked those questions knowing full well that real Christians had not done any of those things.

So, yes, there are many reports from those called "early Church Fathers" that demonstrate that early professors of Jesus did NOT believe that they were to be involved in activities that caused violent harm to others, including violent sports and military warfare.

More on how that position changed for those outside of the true Church of God is expected to be shown in the next edition of this magazine.

victors.

This is what Christ demands of us today!

Allied armies then OCCUPIED the conquered territory, enforcing the will of the occupying powers. Similarly, once we completely surrender – repent – to Christ and are baptized, God’s Spirit comes within us. It begins to influence OUR ways of thinking, acting and living. No one thought it strange that the Americans, British or French should claim the right to tell the defeated Axis Powers what to do – to interfere with and regulate the lives of the conquered. This is the right that God claims once we have completely surrendered to Him.

Even so, the OCCUPYING Holy Spirit does not come within us for the purpose of taking away our free moral agency. It won’t FORCE US to do anything! It will only lead us in the right direction and give us added strength to FOLLOW ITS leading. We COULD REBEL again, and be at war again, if we so choose. But if we continue to rebel, our FINAL defeat – the Lake of Fire – might well be compared to an all-out annihilating nuclear holocaust with NO CHANCE OF SURRENDER! Let’s not choose THAT way! But rather follow God’s Spirit as it helps, directs and empowers us to practice our merciful Conqueror’s WAY of life!

1. Did Jesus Christ say no one who put any other person or thing AHEAD of Him could be His disciple? Luke 14:26, 27. Does this extend to include the person’s own LIFE also? Verse 26.

COMMENT: Luke 14:26 has the unfortunate translation of the Greek word *miseo*, Strong’s #3404, as “hate”, when it should be rendered “love less by comparison.” We are not to hate our parents and family!

2. Did He say that whoever would quit being their old sinful selfish self, and give up or “lose” their life to Christ, they would live? Matthew 16:24, 25.

COMMENT: Jesus is actually talking about giving one’s life in TOTAL OBEDIENCE AND SERVICE to God – even DYING for Him, if He should require that of us – in return for ETERNAL life!

3. Is surrendering to Christ something to be considered lightly? Or must we first “count the

cost” – realizing what surrendering to God really entails? Luke 14:28-33.

COMMENT: These lessons are showing you what GOD REQUIRES of those who would follow Him. The question is: what are you going to DO about it?

A Fuller and Richer Life

Does our UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER of self to God also mean He wants all our MATERIAL GOODS too?

OF COURSE NOT! We have a MULTI-BILLIONAIRE HEAVENLY Father! The EARTH IS HIS, and the fulness thereof! He doesn’t need anything FROM US, but we DESPERATELY NEED EVERYTHING from Him!

God WANTS us to keep EVERYTHING that is GOOD for us, according to His divinely revealed laws! He wants us to give up only those things which are BAD FOR US – especially doing those things we DO which are motivated by our evil carnal nature.

1. Jesus came to call us OUT of this TROUBLED WORLD. But did He also come to make possible a fuller and richer life? John 10:10.

COMMENT: This means He came that we might have a happy, joyful and productive life HERE AND NOW! A life just FILLED with interest, ZEAL and USEFULNESS. HE DID NOT TELL US TO BEND OUR BACKS UNDER A MOUNTAIN OF HUMAN WOE AND SUFFERING! Or to do penance and live in poverty and misery!

Conversion does not mean you cast all material things aside. Instead, conversion makes possible for the first time our intelligent use of God’s material creation ACCORDING TO HIS LAWS!

2. Did Christ say: “Throw material wealth and physical pleasures away and seek ONLY the Kingdom of God”? Matthew 6:33.

COMMENT: Notice again what He DID say: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

So, it is not the giving up of material things that God is interested in – it is the ATTITUDE you have toward them! Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God, and THEN

(secondarily in importance) shall these other things be ADDED to you. God wants to BLESS US with material things – NOT TAKE THEM AWAY!

Let's be BALANCED in our thinking about these things. Let's understand the working of God's mind. We are here to learn how to use the material world, not ABUSE it. We are here to learn how to be happy and how to make others happy, too.

If you seek FIRST the Kingdom of God with the wisdom and understanding of the Holy Spirit God promises to place in your mind, God will RICHLY BLESS YOU both spiritually and physically. You will have an inward joy and peace of mind and assurance of eternal salvation, as this confused and chaotic world grows more and more hectic each day!

Now Is YOUR TIME to Repent

Humans are now engaged in a momentous struggle, the RESULT of which could well prove to be the TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN LIFE FROM THIS PLANET!

Yet almost no one understands the real CAUSE of this world's chaotic conditions, and of the wretched plight of millions of human beings.

The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, foretold these precise times. We have now entered the last days of this age when the unrestrained pulls of carnal nature are now bringing this world into a final convulsive climax – the results of which Christ said would be the complete annihilation of man from this earth, were He not to intervene.

1. How did Paul describe mankind in general today? 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Notice especially verse 5.

COMMENT: Yes, people PROFESS Christianity – they attend churches – they have a “FORM of godliness,” but that mere outward FORM and CEREMONY IS NOT enough! Their sometimes smooth-sounding words are also not enough.

God demands a COMPLETE REVERSAL in the natural evil inclinations of mankind. In other words, TOTAL REPENTANCE of following the ways that seem right to human conscience, and a complete TURNING AROUND to begin following the way of God as revealed in the Bible!

2. What else does God have to say concerning this present evil world we have all had a part in? 1 John 2:15-17 and Romans 12:2.

COMMENT: Here is the very STARTING POINT on the way to salvation! God commands us to COME OUT OF THIS WORLD AND FORSAKE ITS WAYS! Not to be conformed to its ways, but to become like Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to come within us and HELP CHANGE US!

This world is now teetering on the brink of UTTER OBLIVION! Terrible suffering lies just ahead for those who are not under God's protection.

Are you NEGLECTING your opportunity for salvation and safety in these trying times, and in the absolutely hideous days just ahead? Are you THROWING AWAY your opportunity for ETERNAL LIFE in preference to the corrupt, TEMPORARY lusts of the flesh and the temptations of this world?

The apostle Paul was inspired to write:

“how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3)

Yes, HOW SHALL WE? The biggest question you now face is this: WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT? Now is YOUR TIME to repent and receive God's Spirit. IT'S LATER THAN MOST THINK!

Your Faith Is Necessary

Let's understand exactly what part your own PERSONAL FAITH or belief has in repentance, and in your receiving of God's Holy Spirit.

1. Does God state that Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins so He might deliver us from this present evil age and provide us access to the Father? Galatians 1:3, 4 and Ephesians 2:18. Are we to BELIEVE this with all our being, having FAITH IN CHRIST'S SACRIFICE for our sins? Acts 20:21.
2. Must WE also BELIEVE – have faith in – Christ's gospel message concerning the imminent establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth? Mark 1:15. (This obviously INCLUDES belief in Christ as our Savior and coming King.)

Must we also repent to ultimately enter that Kingdom? Same verse.

3. Must we repent and believe to receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38. (Baptism is the outward expression of our inward believing.) What about obedience? Acts 5:32.

COMMENT: God requires

THREE PRIOR CONDITIONS on YOUR part before you can receive the gift of His Holy Spirit.

First, you must REPENT of sin! Second, you must BELIEVE IN Christ as your Savior. But you cannot believe in Christ unless you also believe His message – the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 16:15-16). Third you must demonstrate to God your willingness to obey Him (Acts 5:32; Hebrews 5:9).

However, NEITHER your repentance, your obedience, NOR YOUR FAITH can result in salvation! They are merely PRIOR CONDITIONS. But when you supply these three conditions of repentance, personal faith, and obedience, then GOD STANDS BOUND BY HIS PROMISE to give you His Holy Spirit which imparts Christ's RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HIS FAITH. THESE are the ingredients that "SAVE" and ultimately result in ETERNAL, LIFE!

Let's be sure we really understand what KIND of faith is required for salvation.

The Faith That SAVES

Millions have been deceived into falsely believing they HAVE a "salvation" which they do NOT yet have at all! GOD HELP US TO REALLY UNDERSTAND!

It is NOT YOUR faith in Christ – a faith YOU supply by believing in Him as Savior – that saves you. It is CHRIST'S FAITH, which HE supplies and places in you by His Holy Spirit, which will ultimately save you! Notice this vital truth in your Bible.

1. Does God plainly state that we are saved through "faith"? Ephesians 2:8. But is this OUR faith – the kind of faith that we can humanly supply? Or is this kind of faith a "GIFT" from God? Same verse.

COMMENT: Notice that the particular faith spoken of in this scripture is "NOT OF YOURSELVES." This is another kind of faith!

The faith that really saves is GIVEN TO US BY GOD – it is a GIFT FROM HIM! You don't supply it or work it up.

2. By WHOSE faith are we justified or made blameless in the sight of God? Galatians 2:16, KJV.

COMMENT: Notice Paul does not say, by YOUR faith in Jesus Christ – he says by "the FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST." Paul is talking about CHRIST'S FAITH – the faith HE has and uses – the same faith with which He performed all His miracles – the same faith by which He lived. It is HIS FAITH, placed by a miracle – as a gift direct from God – INTO YOU!

Related to faith, the late Herbert W. Armstrong taught:

Christ's faith in us

Galatians 3:22 ... the promise by faith OF Jesus Christ ...

Now, not our faith IN Christ, but by the faith OF Christ. That is Jesus Christ's own faith. That is the faith Christ used to walk on water. That's the faith Christ used when He raised the dead. That's the faith Christ had, and that Christ used. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ gives that same faith to us. And that is Christ's faith. It's not man's faith. It's not a faith we work up. It's not anything. That's not our faith.

Now, it says back here in the second chapter, which I didn't go into today, that "we have believed in Jesus Christ" [Now, that's our faith]. In order that we might be justified by the faith OF Christ" (Galatians 2:16). We believe in Christ, and He gives us His faith, and that justifies us, and the sacrifice of Christ, of course, justifies us – the faith OF Jesus Christ. The word "of" denotes possession, and means it's the faith that belongs to Christ, not the faith that belongs to you, that you work up.

3. Wasn't it to prevent man from thinking he can save himself, that Paul had to point out this was a SPECIAL KIND of faith? Ephesians 2:9.

Notice the words “lest anyone should boast.”

COMMENT: Millions have been deceived into believing that WE must somehow supply the FAITH that brings salvation! If WE could work up, or if WE could supply this FAITH by which we are saved, WOULDN'T THAT, in fact, amount to our producing OUR OWN SALVATION by the very WORKS OF SUPPLYING THIS FAITH?

Paul was very careful to point out that this faith is “NOT OF YOURSELVES, ... lest anyone should boast”! (Ephesians 2:8-9).

4. Is this SAVING faith imparted to us through the GIFT of the Holy Spirit which God promises to give us after we repent, believe and are baptized? Acts 2:38 and Galatians 5:22, KJV.

COMMENT: You must first repent and believe IN CHRIST, as a condition, a prerequisite, in order that you may receive the faith OF Christ. HIS faith is placed miraculously within you by the Holy Spirit!

How clear it becomes that there is really NOTHING we, of ourselves, can actually do to save ourselves! Yet we must comply with God's CONDITIONS before He will set His hand to save us. Our role is to REPENT and SURRENDER OUR WILL – OUR WHOLE BEING – to God and His Word, and then trust Him by the FAITH OF CHRIST to clean us up spiritually and ultimately give us eternal life.

But the longer you put repentance off, the harder it will become. WHY it should be difficult to just go and throw oneself on God's mercy, ask His forgiveness, and give ONESELF to Him, is hard to understand. Yet something in the human nature within us will keep tempting one to PUT IT OFF. That temptation is NOT OF GOD, you may be sure!

IF in your heart you DO want to turn to a FULL and JOYFUL life filled with God's SPIRIT, then WHY DELAY? Yes, now IS YOUR TIME to repent! Don't look for a certain feeling, but just REPENT, BELIEVE and OBEY God. That is the true way to salvation.

More on baptism can be found in our free booklet, available online at ccog.org, titled About Baptism.

5. Will salvation be offered to all who ever lived? Luke 3:6; Isaiah 52:10. Why? Acts 10:34-

36, 17:30-31; 1 Timothy 2:4. And the motivation?
1 John 4:8-11, 16; cf. Genesis 18:25c.

COMMENT: Despite what the Bible teaches in the Old and New Testaments, most people who claim to believe the Bible have been taught otherwise.

Some have called versions of this teaching as “apocatastasis.”

Apocatastasis comes from the Greek word apokatastasis. The Latin definition (per The Catholic Encyclopedia) is restitutio in pristinum statum, restoration to the original condition. The Greek term apokatastasis is used in the Book of Acts 3:21.

What was the original condition?

31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good (Genesis 1:31).

In theological terms, the concept of apocatastasis is sometimes used to support the teaching of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the Earth — and that is a part of it.

Generally speaking, when theologians use the term apocatastasis, they are referring to the doctrine that at some time God will offer salvation to everyone, such as after the second resurrection (there are also other views of it).

The biblical truth is that God will offer salvation to all that ever lived.

The Continuing Church of God (CCOG) asserts that the Bible teaches that all will ultimately be given an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 17:3; Luke 3:6) and that nearly all (perhaps over 99.9%) people who ever lived will accept that opportunity. Therefore, nearly all will gain eternal life in the kingdom of God and the relatively few who do not will not be eternally tormented, but will be put out of their misery (Malachi 4:3; Revelation 21:4). Thus, the CCOG teaches that the opportunity for salvation will be universal, and although the vast majority will be saved, some few will not.

While the scriptures shown in this paper support apocatastasis and they are grouped together for ease of emphasis, a reading of them clearly shows that God's plan of salvation as understood and taught by the CCOG has broad scriptural support. More on that can be found in our free book, online at ccog.org, titled Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.

The overwhelming theme of the Bible is that God is love and that because of His love He sent His Son, Jesus, so that humans would have the opportunity for salvation through Him.

John wrote:

8 ... God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another ... 16 God is love ... (1 John 4:8-11, 16)

The overwhelming theme of the Bible is that God loves us and that God has a plan for us. Certainly, a God of love has a plan that results in nearly all humans being saved as opposed to most being permanently lost.

Jesus said:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

Notice that love is the motivator for God, and this led Him to send His Son to die so that the world may not be condemned but may be saved. This means that ALL MIGHT be saved (not that all will be saved). All will have an opportunity. God's plan is NOT limited to a few elect like many groups teach. Do you believe that Jesus died for the world or only a relative few? Would not a God of love have a plan that would result in nearly everyone being saved through the sacrifice

of His Son?

Jude teaches:

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 20-21)

Notice that it is teaching that is the love of God that brings eternal life. Does God love everyone or only a few?

Paul teaches:

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

Does God have this type of love towards all or only an elect few? And if it is towards all, then will not God do whatever is necessary to call all?

Isaiah shows:

1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. (Isaiah 59:1)

Thus, God certainly can save!

Psalm 145 reminds everyone that:

8 The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. 9 The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works. (Psalm 145:8-9)

Notice that it is God's tender mercies that are over all His works. Love is what God really is.

Since God is good to ALL, ALL will have an opportunity for salvation! (To be continued)

Questions and Answers



By Bob Thiel

Q: My problem is that my parents always blame me for things that my brothers or sisters actually do. Then they get angry at me when I try to explain that I'm not at fault or have done nothing wrong. Why is this? (Adapted from Dear Youth 86. Youth Magazine, January 1986)

A. No one wants to get blamed, particularly when they don't think they did anything wrong. It certainly is upsetting to be constantly blamed unjustly. This does not just happen to children, but also can happen to adult Christians.

Jesus said:

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

So, yes, adults also get blamed and even punished when they have done nothing wrong.

The Apostle Peter wrote:

19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. (1 Peter 2:19-20)

Many have to suffer because of the actions of others. Of course, we may not always realize it, but others are

likely suffering from some of our actions.

That said, you asked why this happens to kids like you.

Let's look at some possible reasons.

One thing to consider is whether or not you are getting ALL the blame, or just part of it. Another to consider is that your brother or sister may also feel that they are unjustly blamed much of the time.

But maybe you really are being singled out too often. Sometimes it happens like this: A teenager is not involved in starting a problem. but when the parents' step in to solve the situation, perhaps the you might become the most vocal and/or disrespectful.

The parents then often will think that the disrespectful one may deserve more punishment even than the ones who started the problem. The disrespectful one likely remembers who was at fault to begin with and feels it's unfair.

Yet, while what the parents normally care about is solving the problem (which probably includes noise of some sort), as opposed to who is the problem, when they step in.

Another possibility is that you now are usually innocent. but in the past, you were often the one who was at fault. If so. Perhaps your parents still jump to the conclusion you are wrong even when you aren't.

How can you solve this?

Well, as your parents continue to see that you are changing, and that your word can be relied upon, in time,

they'll eventually recognize that you have changed and be a lot more inclined to accept your explanations.

That takes patience and a positive attitude on your part.

Consider one more possibility: Maybe you have been at fault, but are unwilling to recognize your mistake. Take a hard look at yourself and see if this might not be so.

Also, when you have calmed down some time after an incident, you could, meekly, ask you brother or sister if they thought you had done anything wrong. One thing that happens in marriage is that your spouse may see or bring out things about you that you did not know about yourself. To a lesser degree, it may be that your brother or sister may be able to assist you that way.

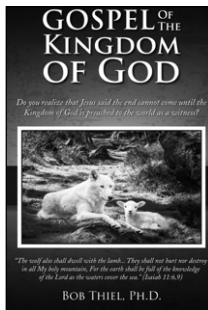
Or, dare I say, your parents if you meekly go to them?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

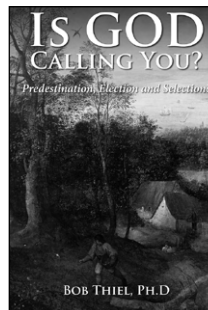
7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Galatians 6:7-9)

With that and the other scriptures in this section in mind, take comfort in knowing that although we all sometimes get blamed when we don't deserve, we usually get much mercy we don't deserve also. And, in time, we all receive the results of our actual behavior, no matter who got the blame in the short term.

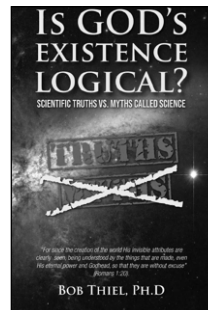
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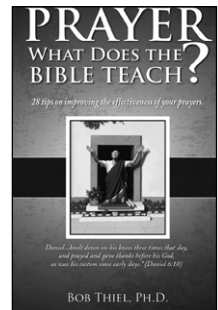
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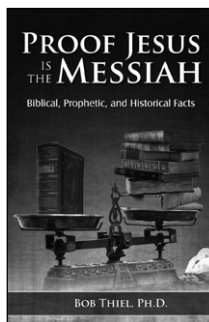
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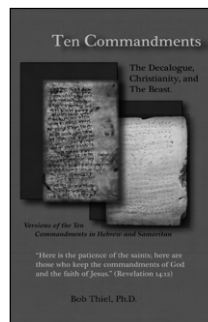
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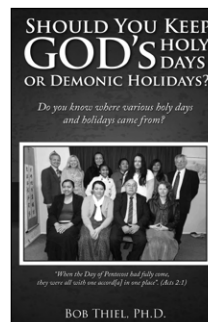
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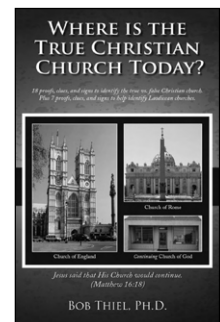
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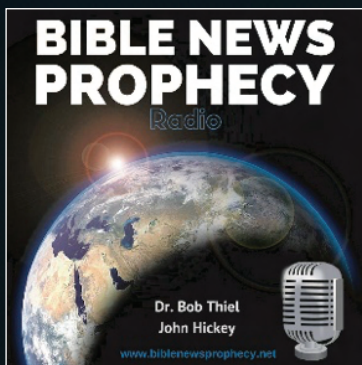
The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast



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



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CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the CCOG Spanish language website.

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The Continuing Church of God also uses books, personal visits, daily electronic newsletters, and weekly letters to the brethren to support Matthew 24:14, Romans 11:25, and Matthew 28:19-20.