AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

BIBLE

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

To the Ephesians: "We Are His Workmanship, Created . . . Unto GOOD WORKS . . ."

LESSON 42

What our STUDENTS SAY

From Belgium

"Thank you very much for your Bible Correspondence Course. I no longer look at things through the same eyes, and reading the Bible gives me joy and security in life. Thank you once again for your precious gifts, which are worth more than all the fortunes of the world together."

—Man, Hainaut, Belgium

State Policeman Speaks

"I have been with the Indiana State Police for ten years and I see the public in every 'light' and character. I try to fight (alone) a drinking problem which goes up and down when I can't consciously disregard the many pressures of life and the influence of so-called friends around me. The WHY of the things in life which involve death, poor deformed people, dreaded diseases, seeing poor babies and children dead and mutilated, and horrible murder and rape of the innocent stir through my mind. I know you get letters like this all the time, but the individual, such as me, has to knock that shell from around him sometime! I've listened to the program and listed over the months many articles I want to study. I would also like to enroll in the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course."

—State Trooper, Indiana

From Australia

"I am a regular reader of *The* PLAIN TRUTH and was interested to note that you have a Bible Correspondence Course which has enlightened many and put meaning into life. Would you please enroll me in this Course as I find that our church does not offer anything which helps adequately for private Bible study."

—New Student, Highgate, South Australia

Letter From a 12-Year-Old

Will you please send me your Bible Course? I am a 12-year-old boy. I listen to you preach on the radio. I agree with you, and we don't celebrate Christmas, Easter, or any other pagan day, except Thanksgiving."

—New Student, Alabama

• *That's the right attitude! Thanksgiving isn't a pagan Gentile day. Check up in any encyclopedia. It's a national American holiday like the Jews' Feast of Dedication or Purim.*

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LESSON 42

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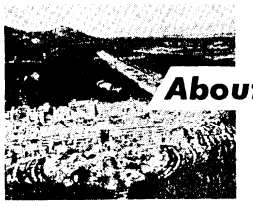


About Our Cover . . .

Nearly 2000 years ago the Apostle Paul revealed to the Christians of Ephesus the great purpose Almighty God is working out in human life.

Today the ruins of Ephesus still stand in Turkey. Its streets are quiet, its theater—pictured on our cover—empty. Yet God's purpose continues according to the outline of His Plan—creating GOOD WORKS.

Ewing Galloway 1165

WHAT WILL YOU *DO* FOR ETERNITY?

HOW WILL you spend eternity? Doing *what*? This world's religions usually promise a heaven of idleness and ease as the reward of the saved.

Most people consequently conceive of heaven as a place of rest—a PLACE TO *GO*—BUT WITH NOTHING TO DO WHEN YOU *GET* THERE!

Heaven, to most people, is never-ending boredom, complete lack of activity set in a pastel landscape and cushioned from sensation by fleecy white clouds. It is a *virtual nirvana* awaiting those who pass by the "pearly gates."

Does that sound like "heaven" to you?

Is the reward of the saved a retirement home in the sky?

Just what will you DO for all eternity? *Nothing at all?*

Doing WHAT Forever?

Most people have never understood *why* God promised the gift of eternal life to those He calls.

Few realize that eternal life with nothing to do would be an eternity of UTTER BOREDOM —*the worst kind of punishment.*

Eternal boredom is not the reward of the saved your Bible describes!

Why is it you have never before been told what lies ahead for Christians who are to be born again into God's Kingdom? Why is this world in *total ignorance* about the wonderful goal God has set for mankind—the very purpose for human life?

Satan at Work

Satan the devil and his human agents have made the reward of the saved appear so uninspiring, so unattractive, so absolutely boring, that it is no wonder even professing Christians would rather remain alive in corruptible human flesh than "go to their reward"!

Remarkable as it may seem, God Almighty has promised a fantastic future for those who qualify to be born into His Family! No human has fully conceived of the tremendous reward that awaits true Christians as it is revealed in your Bible!

Paul was inspired to write, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

WHY hasn't man understood his destiny?

Paul continued, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the DEEP THINGS OF GOD. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? *even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*"!

Only God's Holy Spirit can open the human mind to the *deep spiritual truths* of the Bible. That is why it is so vitally important for you to begin your study of this Correspondence Course *each day* with personal prayer, asking God humbly to instruct and guide you in understanding and acting on the truths you are learning.

UPI Photo

If the reward of the saved is eternal retirement, thousands of elderly men and women already know its boredom and unhappiness. Your Bible reveals something altogether different. Study the TRUTH in this lesson.

Eternal Life a Gift!

What *is* eternal life?

Eternal life is life unlimited by duration of finite time.

God Almighty has eternal life; one of His names is "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14), which means He has self-perpetuating life. He exists *because* He exists!

Since He is LIFE-GIVER, God offers the GIFT of eternal life to Christians.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:* not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

There is *nothing* you can do to earn eternal life. No righteousness on your part can ever buy the priceless gift of eternal life.

But—more important—notice WHY God offers the gift of eternal life: "For we are his *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus *unto* GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

We have been created for a noble purpose. Our lives were given to us not to waste in an eternity of idleness and ease. We were created to be instruments of God's workmanship.

God's ultimate purpose for offering mankind eternal life is *to perpetuate good works forever!* But what kind of good works? *That* so few understand.

God at Work!

Jesus said of the Father, "My Father *worketh* hitherto, and I WORK!" (John 5:17.)

Death is a fearful reality—and only God has eternal life to give. Few understand *why* He offers the gift of life. *Wide World Photo*

God Almighty reveals Himself to us as a busy, active being. One who is constantly accomplishing, WORKING!

If you submit to God's divine will, and prove by your actions that you will continually live in obedience to His commandments—doing here and now the very same good works both the Father and Christ the Son are doing—then God will give you eternal life as a *free gift*. And with it comes the opportunity to continue doing GOOD WORKS *FOREVER!*

God has eternal life—and HE DOES GOOD WORKS!

When He gives you eternal life—YOU WILL DO GOOD WORKS TOO!

What you DO for all eternity depends on your *works* now!

Jesus told His disciples, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then he shall *reward every man according to his works*" (Mat. 16:27).

Yes, eternal life is God's gift to you—paid for by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—but what you will be doing *forever*—what you are qualifying for—depends on YOU! That's why your job is called the "*reward* of the saved"—*it must be earned!*

Thrilling Future Ahead

Puny man with his carnal mind has never remotely glimpsed the wonders ahead for those who are born again.

As a member of God's divine Family you will share in the excitement of new projects, new responsibilities, new and *lasting* accomplishments, the tremendous joy of success after success—doing good works instead of evil works so prevalent on earth today.

Human life with its fleeting temporal responsibilities and pleasures will soon be over! God intends for us to focus our eyes on the goals ahead—the wonderful World Tomorrow—the beginning of ETERNITY!

When you are born again at the resurrection you will be a happy, obedient member of God's government, able to administer that government for the *benefit of others*.

This lesson is designed to show you, *in detail*, some of the jobs, duties and responsibilities of the future. You will learn the wonderful accomplishments in store for those who submit to God now, and begin to obey His commandments.

You are ready to begin to study the ultimate goal for your life—the reason WHY you were born—and learn WHAT YOU WILL *DO* FOR ALL ETERNITY!

LESSON 42

Confusion of Terms!

Three simple words are the basis for understanding just what you will do for eternity. Because these words have been misunderstood, often deliberately misinterpreted, mankind has never understood his destiny.

These three important words are, *"gift,"* *"promise"* and *"reward"*!

Today the vast majority of professing Christians don't believe in the *gift* of eternal life. They believe they already have an immortal soul and have no need to receive immortality and eternal life as a free *gift* from God.

Few actually understand that the "promises" made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were confirmed in Jesus Christ to all who become His brethren by the begettal of the Holy Spirit. And fewer still realize that this promise is not heaven, but is the Kingdom ruled and governed by God which Christ Himself will set up *on this earth* at His Second Coming!

But nearly everyone, it seems, fails to understand the real meaning of the word "reward"! As a result they don't know what the reward of the saved is, who will receive it, how to get it, when it will be given, and by whom it is offered!

Yet, this modern confusion of terms is unique to religion.

No one misunderstands the word *"gift"* when applied to birthdays, or anniversaries. No one misunderstands the word *"promise,"* when treaties are broken between nations or a bride is left waiting in front of a church. No one misunderstands the word *"reward"* when a criminal is wanted by the police, or when a child earns a treat for obedience!

No, confusion of terms is *unique to religion*—the blame lies at Satan's feet!

Why?

Because Satan the devil has carefully and cleverly *mislabeled* all forms of worship. His has been a 6000-year long propaganda campaign which makes the truth out to be a lie, and presents A LIE AS THOUGH IT WERE GOD'S TRUTH. As a result multiple BILLIONS have been deceived since Adam and Eve were first led astray in the Garden.

Let's begin by setting the tables straight:

1. What is the *Bible* definition of the word *"gift"*? Notice Romans 6:23.

COMMENT: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, under numbers 5483 and 5486 of its Greek lexicon, defines "gift" as it is used in Romans 6:23 thus: "to grant as a favor . . . to give freely."

A gift is *not* that which is earned as the result of work. It is *not* given as the fulfillment of a promise. It fulfills no obligation, but is given *freely*.

God Almighty gives eternal life *freely* to whomever He chooses and whenever He chooses. It is His gift—He is the Life-giver—only God HAS eternal life to give. But there are terms and conditions under which He makes His gift available.

2. What is the *Bible* definition of the word *"promise"*? Notice Hebrews 9:15.

COMMENT: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, under number 1860 of its Greek lexicon, defines "promise" as used in Heb. 9:15 thus: "a divine *assurance* of good."

A promise is like a blank check from God Almighty. It is His personal guarantee that He will honor His part of any agreement, covenant or contract He has made.

He has promised New Testament Christians the eternal inheritance of this earth as the heirs of Abraham to whom the promise was originally made. In order to fully enjoy the promise of eternal inheritance of this earth, God will freely give Christians the gift of eternal life. We could not enjoy the promise forever without the freely given gift of eternal life.

3. What is the *Bible* definition of the word *"reward"*? Notice I Cor. 3:8.

COMMENT: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, under number 3408 of its Greek lexicon, defines the word *"reward"* as used in I Cor. 3:8 as follows: "pay for service, hire, wages."

A reward is given to the man that *earns it by his work!*

The reward of the saved is therefore not the gift of eternal life! The reward is given to those who will already have been born again and will have received the gift of eternal life. It is given to those who will have already become inheritors of the promise made to Abraham. The reward is based on individual works, and it determines what born again Sons of God will DO for all eternity!

What Is the Reward of the Saved?

1. Did Jesus promise to bring a reward with Him when He comes? Rev. 22:12-13. How will the reward be given? Doesn't it depend on every man's individual works? Same verses.

2. Do those who have obeyed receive a blessing? Verse 14. Aren't they permitted into the New Jerusalem which will come down to earth from heaven? Same verse. Do they also receive the gift of eternal life Adam rejected long ago? Same verse, note the phrase "tree of life" and compare with Gen. 2:9.

3. Isn't this principle of reward for good works revealed throughout the Bible? Isa. 3:10. Those who are wicked will be punished, won't they? Verse 11.

4. Who are those who receive punishment as the reward they have earned? Have they refused to obey God's commandments? Rev. 22:15.

5. Did Paul reveal God would judge every man on the basis of his own deeds? Rom. 2:5-6. Would some receive glory and honor with immortality and eternal life? Verse 7. Is this because they have patiently done good works? Same verse, note the words, "*well doing.*" Then the reward of a Christian involves responsibilities.

6. What about those who will not obey God's Word which is the truth? John 17:17 and Rom. 2:8-9. Does God look upon the person when determining his reward, or on the works themselves? Rom. 2:11.

COMMENT: God looks on the heart of each man and rewards him according to his works!

Those who have obeyed receive good rewards, but all have sinned (Rom. 3:23)! Unless their evil works are repented of, God must reward a sinner the wages of sin which he has earned—death (Rom. 6:23).

When a sinner repents, the blood of Christ takes away the death penalty for any evil works of the past. Then each person must begin to produce *good works* to receive a good reward!

Reward Must Be Earned!

1. Has God promised that one day those who are called will be born again in His own image? I Cor. 15:49. Will we be just like He is? I John 3:2.

2. Does Christ command us to strive to become perfect now as the Father is? Mat. 5:48.

COMMENT: The word "be" in Mat. 5:48 should properly be translated, "become." Becoming perfect is a process. Perfection is a quality of character, and the creation of perfect character like God Almighty has TAKES TIME!

3. Was Jesus Christ perfect? How did He become perfect? Heb. 2:9-11. Notice especially verse 10.

COMMENT: Jesus became perfect by learning from and overcoming the trials and tests of human experience.

4. How was the perfection of Christ's experience accomplished? Heb. 5:8-9. Even though He was God's Son, did He have to learn obedience? Verse 8. Did Christ overcome? John 16:33.

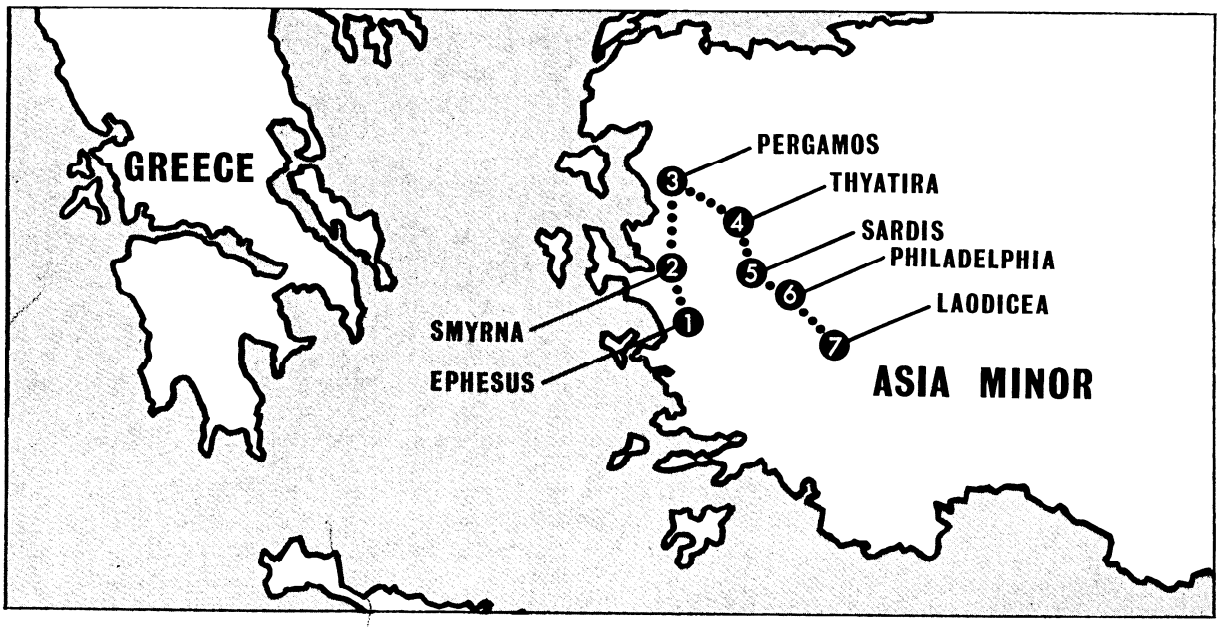
COMMENT: Overcoming is the result of living by God's commandments in spite of trial and test, and growing in the strength of spiritual character is the result of overcoming.

5. How important is overcoming to your salvation? Rev. 21:7. Does God expect Christians to overcome? Rom. 12:21.

COMMENT: No one can overcome for you. Overcoming is what you must DO for yourself with the help of Jesus Christ to qualify for God's Kingdom.

6. Does God promise rewards to those who overcome? Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; and

MAIL ROUTE CHURCHES



especially 3:12 and 3:21. Read each verse carefully.

COMMENT: God's gift of eternal life and the promise of eternal inheritance are not earned as a result of our works. But the special rewards given to the seven churches mentioned in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation will depend upon how much they overcome and DO GOOD WORKS.

The reward of the saved is granted to those who "work out" their salvation (Phil 2:12). The reward of the saved MUST BE EARNED! Now understand:

Rewards of the Seven Churches

Few people have ever realized that within the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation are condensed almost 2000 years of church history! Listed in time order here are the past five epochs of God's One True Church, together with the vital description of *our Church today*, and that of the not-far-distant Laodicean period climaxing this age!

You should request immediately your free copy of the fully illustrated booklet, "A True History of the True Church," if you don't already have one. Study it in connection with this section of your Correspondence Course lesson.

1. At the end of each of the descriptions of the seven stages in the history of God's Church is there a definite promise recorded? Rev. 2:7, 10, 17, 26 and 28 and 3:4, 5, 12 and 21. Are these promises of reward made only to the overcomers—those who through the power of the Spirit of God, are overcoming the world around them, Satan and his demons, and themselves—their carnal human nature? Same verses.

2. Are the rewards granted to each of these churches all the same? Same verses.

COMMENT: Each Church has its *work* to perform. Jesus says of each Church, "I know thy works."

Some perform their work better than others. They overcome more. They are therefore able to handle greater responsibilities in the Kingdom of God and are deserving of greater rewards.

All who overcome are to inherit the Kingdom of God—they will constitute the Kingdom. But they will not all occupy the same position in the Kingdom. Jesus Christ does not occupy the same position as the Father. Yet both of them have eternally constituted the realm of God.

To those who are overcomers in each Church epoch there are DIFFERENT REWARDS granted! That is, those who overcome are not all called to perform the same function in God's Kingdom—there will be a variety of jobs to do for all eternity, and not everyone's responsibility will be the same! Some churches will be called upon to do special duty, theirs will be a SPECIAL REWARD!

What Reward THIS Church Is Promised!

1. What does God say of this era—the Philadelphia era of His True Church? Rev. 3:7-13. Does Christ know our works? Verse 8. Has this era of the Church denied the proper name, "Church of God"? Same verse. Even though we have only a little strength, has God multiplied our power by setting before us the *open door* of radio and the printing press? Same verse. Have we been faithful with God's Word? Same verse.

2. What is God's injunction to the Philadelphia era of the Church of God? Verse 11. Will Christ come when this Church era is still active? Note the words, "Behold, I *come quickly*." To those who "hold fast" does Christ promise a crown? Same verse.

COMMENT: A crown is worn by a king—it is a symbol of rulership! Rulership is part of the reward promised the Philadelphia era of God's Church.

3. What else is promised as a reward to the Philadelphia Church era? Rev. 3:12. Is all of this dependent upon being an *overcomer?* Same verse. Through the work of preaching and publishing the gospel by the Philadelphia era of God's Church will there be a special 144,000 who also repent, endure tribulation and overcome? Compare Rev. 3:12 with Rev. 14:1.

COMMENT: Note the expressions "write upon him the name of my God," and "having the Father's name written in their foreheads."

4. What will the Philadelphia era of God's Church DO for eternity? Rev. 3:12. Note the word "pillar." Were Christ's leading disciples called "pillars"? Gal. 2:9.

COMMENT: Responsibility as "pillars" is what God promises to those in God's Church today. Each can qualify to be *spiritual pillars or leaders—the main supports in the "Church" symbolically called "temple" in Rev. 3:12 for all eternity. A pillar is a main support in a temple!*

5. Where will the Philadelphia Church be stationed? Rev. 3:12. Note the words, "temple" and "New Jerusalem."

COMMENT: This Church—the Philadelphia era—is to have the name of the headquarters of the world—the Capital City of the Universe.

The pillars of the Church ought always to be at headquarters so that everyone may appeal to it for decisions.

Each of you can be trained for this job now—

even if it is only by learning to pray for the work at headquarters and by sending to headquarters your tithes for the conduct of the work of this Church. Never since apostolic days has the Work of God been conducted from one centralized location as it is today. Always through the past centuries it has been a scattered work.

Moreover, we, of the Philadelphia Era, are to have the name of God the Father and of the Son. God always places His name where He is. He will be dwelling in the New Jerusalem. So will we! That is *why* we will have His name!

Notice, too, that Scripture reveals "He shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12). We are never to be removed from that reward and responsibility. Think of that!

We are to be at headquarters—executing Jesus Christ's policies—teaching those who need to come to headquarters for decisions throughout eternity as God expands the power and scope of His government! At headquarters we will have the opportunity to help with the master-plan for making a NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH!

Truly the Philadelphia Era of God's Church is promised a wonderful, and very *special* reward!

Unique Duty For Laodicean Era

1. What does Jesus Christ say to the church era typified by the Church of God at Laodicea? Rev. 3:14-22.

2. Will those of the Laodicean era be faithful as the Philadelphia era has been? Verses 15-17. What does Christ recommend for the Laodicean church era? Verses 18-19. Is this fire in which the Laodiceans will be tried the tribulation at the end of this age? I Pet. 1:7-9; I Pet. 4:12. See and compare Jer. 9:7 and Zech. 13:9.

COMMENT: You all ought to be familiar with this graphic description of the lukewarmness of the work which will climax this age.

It is not *this* work of God today. They are recipients and heirs to the riches of spiritual understanding which God is revealing through this Church today—but they will become spiritually smug.

Nothing good can be said about them.

They are not promised deliverance from the coming time of trouble and religious persecution —whereas we of the Philadelphia era *are* promised deliverance.

If they become zealous and repent, if they "love not their lives unto death," then they will receive a good responsibility. But they have first a great period of trial and test to meet. Jesus will send the punishment on them because He loves them.

If they change their ways, He will not figuratively spue them out of His mouth as one who spues out nauseating lukewarm water.

Theresa Goell Photo

The ruins of a Roman stadium stand in what was once Laodicea. The letter addressed to the Church of God there contains a message for us today.

3. What reward awaits those of the Laodicean era who do repent and overcome? Rev. 3:21.

COMMENT: *Notice that they are not called spiritual "pillars"; neither do they have their own thrones.*

They are only qualified through much tribulation to sit with Christ on His throne—*assisting Him directly in the personal administration of His office.*

Here you see yet a different responsibility in the Kingdom of God!

Now contrast these overcomers with those of the other Church epochs. Notice the rewards of the remaining Churches.

Thyatira Era To RULE!

1. What does Christ say to the Thyatira era of God's True Church—the Church of God as it was during the Middle Ages? Is He acquainted with their works? Rev. 2:18-29, especially verse 19.

COMMENT: The "*Church of Thyatira*" was the persecuted Church of the Middle Ages.

That Church was a great body. Jesus says of it: "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy *last works are more than the first*" (Rev. 2:19).

What a contrast to our Church. Jesus said we today "have little strength" (Rev. 3:8). Never has the Church been more scattered than today —yet we have the greatest door ever opened to any Church Era. In the *Middle Ages the*

Church of God was a powerful Church—its last works were even greater than its first. It grew. It overcame.

2. What problem was found in the Thyatira era? Rev. 2:20-23. Who was this woman, Jezebel, called a prophetess? Same verses, see also Rev. 17:4-6.

COMMENT: The Bible symbol for a great false church system is a fallen woman who by her doctrines of licentious compromise leads people into sin.

The original Jezebel was instrumental in the compromise and final apostacy of King Ahab (I Kings 16:31).

This "Jezebel" who rose to persecute and murder God's church during the Middle Ages, who proclaimed herself a prophetess, is none other than the Roman Catholic Church.

During the time of the Waldenses, Satan inspired his church to decree an Inquisition against all who followed God's commands and rejected the Babylonian System quartered in the Vatican. It is conservatively estimated that many hundreds of thousands of innocent people died at the behest of Roman Catholic officials during this well-known persecution—among them were the members of God's True Church of the Thyatira era.

Those who compromised—adopted the corrupt paganism of Rome—and forsook God's commandments were sometimes spared the torture of Catholic inquisitors. In order to save their lives many in the world *did compromise!* The problem of compromise was as important to the Thyatira era as it will be just before Jesus Christ returns when iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold!

3. Does Christ say He will return to punish this great false church for her barbaric persecution of God's people? Rev. 2:22, 23. Will those who compromise in the end-time also be punished in Great Tribulation with the Roman Church? Verse 22 compared with Rev. 18:4.

4. Has this false Church system children? Rev. 2:23.

COMMENT: Her children include the offshoot churches which came out of her "in protest" and are still known by the name "Protestant."

5. What will happen to them? Same verse. Will God *reward* them according to the works in the Thyatira era? Same verse.

6. What is Christ's admonition to the Thyatira era? Verses 24-25.

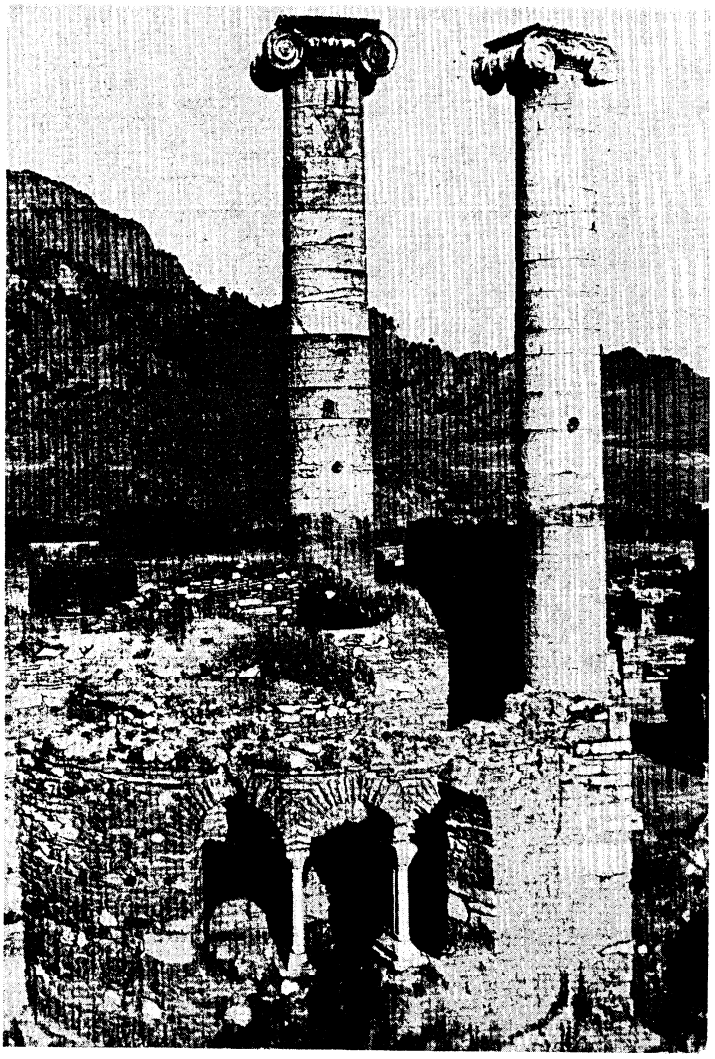
7. What reward is promised to those who "*hold fast*" and "*overcome*"? Verses 26-28. Will they have positions of rulership, absolute authority under Christ, over various nations? Same verses, compare Psa. 2:8.

COMMENT: Those in that age of God's Church *are not to rule over Israel, but over the nations —"ethnos" in Greek, meaning "nations" or "tribes." In the millennium the tribes of Israel will inherit the Gentiles.* That age of the church of God will exercise dominion over the great Gentile families—Russia, China, Germany, the Latin American peoples, African tribes—just as in recent times Gentile nations such as Pakistan, India and Ceylon have recognized the authority of the Royal House of Great Britain ruling today in London, England, in the person of Queen Elizabeth II.

The Thyatira Church will not have the same responsibility as we will have. They will be in authority over nations around this world. They are not to be at headquarters as we shall be. If there are major problems among the nations under their authority, the case will come to us for decision.

Those who constitute that Church will shine in glory with the radiance of "the morning

Overcomers in ancient Sardis will receive the gift of eternal life and a reward of responsibility in God's Kingdom. *Z. Kluger Photo*



star" (Rev. 2:28). The brightest heavenly body next to the sun and moon—as we view the heavens.

Rewards for Other Churches

1. What was written to the Sardis Era of God's Church? Rev. 3:1-6. Did God find their works perfect? Or did He call them a *dead* church which has only preserved the proper name, "Church of God"? Verses 1-2.

COMMENT: The Sardis era of the Church of God—the one which immediately preceded this present Philadelphia era—is DEAD. Their works have not been perfected. Their ministry failed to proclaim the gospel as it ought to have been preached.

2. What is Christ's admonition to this weak Church era? Verse 3.

3. What reward is promised the Sardis Church era? Verses 4-5. See also Rev. 19:8.

COMMENT: There is no responsibility—no definite office mentioned here—only a promise of eternal life. Even the overcomers of that era barely escape with their lives. Indeed, sometimes the righteous scarcely are saved (I Peter 4:18).

Only a few individuals—"a few names"—were overcomers in that era. Only a few individuals within the Church will walk with Christ in white—a symbol of righteousness.

4. What does God say of the Pergamos era of His Church? Rev. 2:12-17. Were there a number who adopted the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, who worshiped Nimrod according to the custom of the pagan "Christmas" season? Verse 15.

COMMENT: The Pergamos era of God's Church existed at the time when paganized Christianity was finally adopted as the state religion of the declining Roman Empire. The lukewarm atmosphere of Christian compromise and the development of the pagan mysteries into Roman Catholicism was strong and took its toll among the weak members of God's True Church.

5. What reward is promised individuals of this era who overcome? Verses 16-17. What is this "hidden manna"? John 6:48-63. And what is the "white stone"? Verse 17.

COMMENT: Here is no promise of special office—such as the one to which we are called—but only a promise of eternal life to individuals.

The white stone was the *tessera* of ancient times, "well known in Asia Minor as a passport to heathen banquets. To each guest invited to the idol feasts, a stone was given with the name of the person written on it; and specimens . . . are to be now seen among the Greek antiquities of the British Museum" (*The Messages to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor,* by Andrew Tait, p. 252).

The promise to that epoch symbolized by the Church in Pergamos is a promise to be permitted entrance to Christ's great banquet and to attend the "marriage supper" of Jesus Christ. The overcomers will be in the Kingdom of God, but as a Church they did not qualify for any special function.

Early Christians Promised Rewards

1. What does God say regarding the first historic era of His True Church? Rev. 2:1-7.

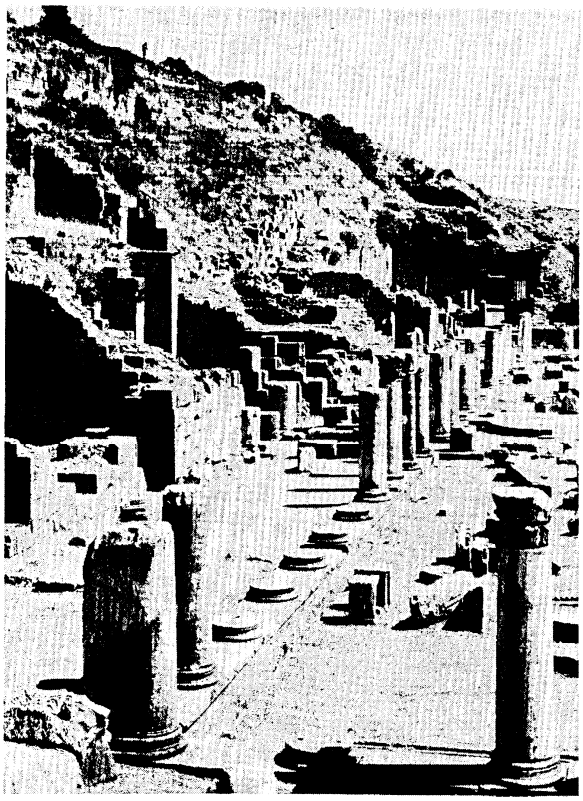
COMMENT: Here is the record of the acts of God's Church after the death of the original apostles—after the Bible had been completed. This section of Scripture begins the chronicle of the seven eras of God's Church to our day.

2. Had the Ephesus era fought false apostles of Simon Magus and the deeds of these followers of Nimrod? Verses 2 and 6.

3. But what had they neglected? Verse 4.

COMMENT: After the death of the early apostles, the early church fled the persecution of the Roman system. After 69 A.D., they quit proclaiming God's Gospel Message, and therefore "left their first love."

4. What is the reward promised individuals



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A colonnade in Pergamos. A headquarters of Satan's pagan system was located here before it was moved to Rome.

of the Ephesus era? Verse 7. Must those of the Ephesus era have overcome and obeyed God as a condition to be given eternal life as a gift? Same verse.

5. Did the Christians who followed them in the Smyrna era suffer poverty, tribulation and martyrdom? Verse 8-11.

COMMENT: The Smyrna era was known for its poverty—they were called "Ebionites," meaning those who are poor. They suffered at the hands of the Samaritan-Roman conspiracy which falsely claimed to be spiritual Israel—falsely claimed to be the Church of God—but were actually the servants of the Devil.

6. What reward is promised to Christians of the Smyrna era? Verse 10.

COMMENT: In none of these cases are there any particular offices to which that Church age was being called. Only the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God is directly extended. But that does not mean they will have no responsibility.

No, indeed!

They may not have been called to be pillars in the Kingdom of God; they may not have been called to rule over whole nations; they will not be in the place of the apostles and of David, or in the place of the prophets teaching the world. But there is a place for them under the apostles—an office which Jesus mentioned in His parable in Luke 19:11-27.

Other Responsibilities for Saints

Protestant and Catholic clergymen alike have deceived millions into believing that born-again Christians will spend eternity in heaven—but your Bible reveals that God will make heaven on earth, and establish the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, on this literal planet.

1. Does the Bible say that the saints will judge the world? I Cor. 6:2; Psalm 149:9. Where will the saints reign? Rev. 5:9-10. As well as being judges will the saints also be kings and priests? Same verses; see also Rev. 1:6.

2. Will the duties of judges, kings and priests be only a few of the rewards offered individual Christians who overcome? Rev. 11:18 and I Pet. 5:4.

3. Has God promised to give rewards to the small and the great? Rev. 11:18. What did Jesus say about the smallest reward in God's Kingdom? Mat. 5:19.

COMMENT: Some are smaller than others in God's sight. Some have not yielded themselves in conformity to the law of God as much as others—they have not let God's law govern their lives to the same degree as others. Jesus said to the disciples—"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,

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Christians at Smyrna suffered persecution. The name "Smyrna" means *death!*

and shall teach men so, he shall be called *the least in the Kingdom of heaven:* but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called *great in the Kingdom of heaven.*"

In the history of the Church of God, some periods have been characterized by *great* zeal, great works, great knowledge of God's law. Other periods have been characterized with flagging zeal, incomplete or diminishing works, a partial neglect of God's law.

In the Kingdom or Family of God there will be individuals of different degree. But for each individual there will be a responsibility, a job to do. Not the same job, of course!—for we are not all called to the same office. But every office is needed.

An entire CIVILIZATION must be built on earth—built this time God's way and not man's way. It will take literally millions of different jobs to create civilization as it ought to be.

YOUR JOB will be what you will find the most pleasure in doing. We do not all get the same pleasure out of the same thing. That is why God has not called us all to the same office.

How Rewards Are To Be Given

1. Did Jesus reveal how He will determine who will receive the greater rewards, and who will receive smaller jobs? Notice the parable of the pounds recorded in Luke 19:11-28.

2. Did Christ picture Himself as a young nobleman who has gone to a far land [God's heavenly throne] to receive a kingdom and to return [to earth]? Verse 12.

3. How did he delegate his property to his servants? Verse 13. But did the people over whom he would rule hate him? Verse 14.

4. When Christ returns, with the power of His Kingdom, will He judge His servants on how much they have done with the pounds He entrusted to them? Verse 15.

5. Even though the responsibility entrusted to each servant was small—a pound in the King James Version meant a British monetary unit which equals about three American dollars—will the reward for handling it well be great? Verses 16-19. But will all receive the same reward? Same verses.

COMMENT: Each is rewarded *"according to his works."* Those who accomplish much will be given much, those who do only a little will receive only a little.

True Christians are the bondservants of Jesus Christ. Some overcome more than others—do more with what they have been given—some develop their spiritual ability more than others. Therefore some will be given rule over many cities during the millennium in the Kingdom of God, while others will have qualified to rule over only a few cities—perhaps only over one!

Who are those who will rule over these cities? Certainly not the Churches of Philadelphia or Thyatira or Laodicea, their rewards are clearly defined.

The answer seems very plain.

The responsibility to guide and control the development of civilization in every city on earth will be vested in those Christians in general who have not been called to other duties. Here, then, is the responsibility—the office—open to those who overcome in the Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos and Sardis.

Some of the individuals in those Churches may have grown immensely—they may even exercise immense authority over many mighty cities, whereas some in the other Churches—Thyatira, for example—may rule over only minor nations or tribes. Some in those Churches may do greater works over giant metropolitan areas than will some in our Church who will be small pillars in the Headquarters of the world.

The reward you earn depends on YOU! It depends on whether you willingly let God make you into His image, or whether you tend to resist His corrections!

God will not make of you what you are not willing to become!

6. What will happen to those who fail to overcome and grow—to increase their responsibilities? Verses 20-24.

7. What is done with the wicked servant's responsibility? Verse 24. Might this seem unjust to some? Verse 25. But what does Christ say? What is the principle by which each person will earn his reward? Verse 26.

COMMENT: One way by which the reward of the saved will be determined is by how much each one does with what he or she is given. Those who accomplish much with what they are given will receive a *great* reward. Those who accomplish little, will receive only a small reward.

But everyone has not been given equal talents and abilities. What does God say is yet another way He will determine the rewards of the saved?

Reward According to Ability

Turn now to the parable of talents recorded in Matthew 25:14-30.

1. Did Christ liken himself to a rich man traveling to a far country—heaven? Verse 14.

2. In what way did He divide up the goods mentioned in the parable? Verse 15. Were all the quantities equal, or didn't He give responsibilities *according to each man's natural ability?* Same verse.

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Modern visitors trace the steps of early Christians down the main street of ancient Ephesus.

COMMENT: The word "talent" in the King James Version is actually a measure of weight. One talent would equal about $1000 in today's world.

Not everyone has been given the same ability. Some have had more education, more leadership, more personality, or more physical strength than others.

In His wisdom, God Almighty knows each one of us far better than we can even know ourselves. He knows where our strengths lie, and what our weaknesses are. He knows that in order to be really happy we must have responsibilities that are a challenge to us, yet not a burden.

Each of our individual abilities is God-given. He has created each of us with a specific purpose in mind, and He has promised to give us the powerful help of His Holy Spirit to achieve that purpose.

Just as our abilities are God-given, so our responsibilities are also God-given—according to the abilities He knows we have.

3. How did each servant deal with the talents God gave him in the parable? Verses 16-18.

4. When Christ returns will He "reckon" with His servants? Mat. 25:19, Rom. 14:12 and II Cor. 5:10.

5. How did Christ reveal each servant would be rewarded? Mat. 25:20-23. Did Christ promise rulership to His faithful servants? Verses 21 and 23. Would faithful servants be permitted to share in the *joy* of the God Family? Same verses.

6. Is there any difference between the rewards given to the first two servants of the parable, even though they may have originally been given different responsibilities based on their natural abilities? Verses 21 and 23.

COMMENT: Even though each man was originally given responsibility based on his natural abilities, both of the first two servants increased their responsibilities one hundred per cent. *They both will receive the same reward!*

7. What of the last servant? Out of fear and laziness did he hide his responsibilities instead of working with them? Verses 24-25. What will Christ say to such a person? Verses 26-30.

8. What will happen to those who fail to do good works—practicing obedience to God's commandments? Verse 30.

9. By what principle will Christ determine how the rewards of the saved will be given? Verse 29. Isn't this parable another example of how rewards are earned—isn't it merely another illustration of the principle mentioned in Luke 19:26?

COMMENT: Christ will give the reward of rulership to those who begin here and now to do good works.

He will determine the rewards of the saved in two ways:

First, He will reward each overcomer according to each person's natural ability. *Second*, He will give those who accomplish more with their limited natural ability the greater reward, and those who accomplish less, lesser rewards.

Those who fail to obey His commandments, who do no good works at all, will be cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer the second death.

Rewards Already Promised Overcomers

Some of the responsibilities in God's Kingdom have already been promised to particular individuals. Your Bible reveals who they are and what jobs they will hold.

1. Who is presently seated with God the Father on the Father's throne? Rev. 3:21. Did Christ overcome? Same verse. Is He now God the Father's "right hand man" with authority over all angels, authorities and powers under His Father? I Pet. 3:22, and Eph. 1:20-21.

2. As the second in authority in the God Family, does Jesus Christ have many crowns—many offices of authority? Is He A GREAT KING? Rev. 19:16.

COMMENT: As our Saviour and elder brother, Jesus Christ—the *firstborn* of many brethren—has already qualified for the highest office under God the Father in the God Family. No one else can ever qualify for His office—God has promised it to Him as His reward!

3. Is Christ also a High Priest? Heb. 5:5.

COMMENT: Christ's duties and responsibilities are many. He has qualified for the highest rewards as both King and Priest in God's Kingdom.

4. Consider next the examples of Saul and David. God created the office of king over the people of Israel in the Old Testament, didn't He? I Sam. 10:24-26 and I Sam. 12:13.

COMMENT: God first selected Saul to rule over Israel. The people approved of him. Had he been a conqueror of his human nature and yielded to God's commandments, he would have qualified to exercise that same office forever in the Kingdom of God. *But Saul failed!*

5. After Saul failed, who did God make King over ancient Israel? II Sam. 7:8. Did God promise that David's throne would be established forever? Verse 16.

6. In the millennium, does God promise that David will rule over the nations of Israel and Judah? Ezek. 37:21-24. At this time will David have the gift of eternal life so he will be able to be King of Israel *forever?* Verse 25.

COMMENT: God chose David, a man after His own heart, to rule instead of Saul. David over-

came! He qualified to rule *throughout eternity* in that office. No one else can ever occupy the office of King over Israel which has been promised to David.

7. When Jesus called the apostles, He didn't call them to fulfill the same office already promised to David. What offices will they be given? Mat. 19:28. Are each of the apostles promised a kingdom? Luke 22:30.

COMMENT: Christ has promised twelve of the fourteen who originally accompanied Him rulership over the twelve tribes of Israel. He didn't call them to fulfill David's office, but to judge separate tribes and rule *under* David.

Many of the men mentioned in the Bible have already qualified for *specific* responsibilities in God's Family.

8. Did the apostle Paul know that a crown was promised him in God's kingdom, even though he suffered death as a martyr in Apostolic times? II Tim. 4:6-8.

Why Kingship a Reward!

Many people are surprised to learn that David will be a King over Israel in the future. They suppose that David would rather be a doorkeeper in God's Kingdom than to exercise rulership over God's people.

The problem is few people have ever really understood the duties of a King as defined by the Bible, and few have realized why God offers Kingship to overcomers as a *reward!*

1. When James and John came to Christ asking of Him a great reward in the Kingdom, what did He say? Mat. 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45. Did Jesus explain the difference between Kingship in God's Kingdom, and the kings of this evil world? Mat. 20:25-28 and Mark 10:42-45.

2. Who was the greatest human example of this sort of selfless service? Mat. 20:28 and Mark 10:45. But who is a greater servant than Jesus Christ? John 14:28 and John 10:29.

COMMENT: God the Father created everything by and with Jesus Christ. He sustains it by the word of His Power. In creating and sustaining the entire universe, the physical laws which govern life on earth, and the spiritual laws which make it possible for human beings to be born into His Family, God is truly the greatest servant of all.

Kingship in God's kingdom will be given to those who prove here and now by their own selfless service in obedience to God's laws that they will continue to serve others in the future.

Those who are faithful in serving in their small physical responsibilities as human beings will be given the opportunity to serve in greater spiritual responsibilities as members of the God Family.

3. What sort of service does a spiritual King render to His subjects? How does God—the greatest King—represent Himself to us? Rom. 8:14-17.

COMMENT: The God Kingdom is a family grown great! Even though God the Father is the greatest King, who has majesty, glory, power and great authority, He represents Himself to us as our Father.

Christ is His firstborn Son. He is also a King. Christians who will be born again are promised rewards of kingship—we will become members of God's own Family, brothers of Jesus Christ, and sons of God the Father. Ours will be a Family relationship. We will all be members of God's own household (Eph. 2:19).

God the Father deals with us as a loving parent. He is concerned for our welfare, our happiness, our needs and our wants. In His capacity as our Father, He uses all of His power, might and authority to help us become more and more like He is.

As a direct consequence, we become happier and happier. Our happiness is our Father's direct reward for His labors in our behalf—just as any father would take joy in teaching, training, guiding, counseling, and helping his children.

4. Does Christ tell us that God is more interested in us than our physical fathers have been? Heb. 12:8 and Luke 11:11-13.

5. Is Jesus Christ also called a "Father"? Isa. 9:6 and Jer. 31:9.

COMMENT: Just as Abraham is called the "father of the faithful" and George Washington is called the "father" of his country, the United States, so Jesus Christ will be called the Father of Israel. He founded Israel in Old Testament times, and will rule over all nations—including Israel—in the World Tomorrow.

Christ will exercise His authority over all the peoples of the earth as a father governs his family.

6. Will Christians born into God's Family receive rewards of rulership over the nations and cities of this earth under Jesus Christ? Rev. 2:26-27 and Luke 19:17, 19. Will they also rule as "fathers"? See Comment.

COMMENT: Just as the founders and rulers of nations are called "fathers" of their countries, so the governors and mayors of cities are called the "city fathers." They guide and plan the various public works of the city they serve.

Those who learn to rule over small responsibilities now by managing their homes according to God's laws, repairing and maintaining their property, keeping their houses neat and clean, handling their finances according to the laws of

tithing, and by properly rearing their children, are qualifying for greater rewards as rulers of cities and nations of homes in God's Kingdom. Then they will be responsible for teaching others the very lessons they have learned.

Those Christians who qualify in technical or industrial fields will help to set the industry and labor of the future aright.

They will teach everyone to give an honest day's work to their employer, instead of promoting laziness by labor strikes.

Converted scientists will teach the scientists of the future to utilize the tremendous powers of chemistry and physics as God Almighty intended them to be used, not to invent super weapons of mass destruction.

Just as Henry Ford is sometimes called the "father of the automobile" and Gregor Mendel was called the "father" of genetic studies, so Christians who are rewarded with rulership in industrial and technical fields will be the future "Fathers of Industry."

Although Christians born again as members of God's Family will have less authority than God the Father and Jesus Christ, they will still be, in a very real sense, "Fathers" who will administer their authority with the selfless love of a father for his children.

They will be the pioneers of the future. The leaders who begin to teach this whole world the lessons of Godly character that man has not learned for 6000 years. Having found true happiness by living in harmony with and not rebellion against God's wonderful laws, they will have the very power of the God Family to teach multiple generations to come the ways of lasting happiness.

Rewards Bring Accomplishment and Service

1. Won't Jesus Christ have other titles as well as that of Father, indicating that He will have other responsibilities? Isa. 9:6. Is Christ called a wonderful counsellor? Same verse.

COMMENT: The Hebrew of this verse could better be translated "Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty," as illustrated by the Masoretic Text (see Isa. 9:5).

What does it mean to be a "wonderful counsellor?"

One of Christ's duties is to advise, guide and instruct His people. His job as our High Priest is to help us with our problems, and he is qualified to do so because He too learned obedience by the things that He suffered (Heb. 2:17-18).

In the future many reborn Christians will be able to serve as "wonderful counsellors" to the nations that will live during the millennium and later in the judgment period. They are already being prepared now by learning lessons of obedience and passing these lessons on as wise counsel to their children.

2. Does the Bible teach women should also be preparing for rewards in God's Kingdom as well as men? I Pet. 3:7. Notice the words, "heirs together of the grace of life." Will there be sex difference in God's Kingdom? Luke 20:35-36.

COMMENT: Women, too, who in this life are diligent in teaching their children the vital principles of God's laws will be qualified, just as men are, to teach others in God's Kingdom. There will be neither male nor female in that world of spirit. All will partake, however, of the characteristics of manliness.

How do women qualify now? By teaching little children who are seeking to learn, but need the correction and help only a mother can provide!

Little children learn by doing chores.

Think of it!

The very jobs you are doing now on a small scale, you will have the chance to do serving hundreds, thousands, perhaps even millions in the *near future!* Then, with the power and wisdom of a member of the God Family, you will be able to always make the right decisions without any miscalculations.

The responsibilities God offers as rewards to overcomers will never be tiresome, irksome tasks. When God gives you eternal life you will never become tired, but instead you will find your strength, your youth and abilities *boundless* (Psa. 103:5)!

Finally World Peace!

1. What other title does Jesus Christ have that He will share with those who are born again? Isa. 9:6. What does it mean to be "Prince of Peace? John 10:10.

COMMENT: Most people have never begun to realize the fullest meaning implied by this final title shared by the members of the Family of God.

The Hebrew word translated here "peace" is "*shalom*" and means much more than merely ceasing from the strife of wars. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (number 7965 in its Hebrew lexicon) reveals the rich meaning of this unique word, "health and complete prosperity."

As Prince of Peace Jesus is coming to reveal to mankind a truly abundant way of life—complete prosperity.

2. Did David realize God could teach this world the way to a rich abundant life? Psalms 16:11.

3. When God's Kingdom is established on this earth in a very few short years from now, will all nations want to learn how they too can have abundant life? Isa. 2:2-4. Will this naturally lead to an end of wars? Verse 4.

4. If you have the ability to teach others the ways of God's laws that lead to abundant life, will you be in great demand as a teacher? Zech. 8:23.

COMMENT: For 6000 years man has consumed himself and his energies in fruitless war after war. In a very few years Jesus Christ is returning to this earth as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and will forcibly put an end to man's final war which would otherwise destroy all life on this planet. But in order to establish a lasting peace, Christ will need to re-educate this world. For one thousand years—called the millennium—this process of re-education will continue until everyone has had an opportunity to learn God's ways.

After the millennium, the one-hundred-year White Throne Judgment Period will make this same wonderful knowledge available to the multiple billions who have never before had a chance to understand God's plan.

To accomplish such a massive re-education program, God Almighty is calling people now to be teachers.

5. Did God promise ancient Israel a time when they would have new teachers? Isa. 30:20. How would these new teachers help them to learn God's laws? Verse 21.

6. How will people react when their teachers are so close at hand to help? Verse 22. And will their new obedience bring blessings upon them? Verses 23-25.

COMMENT: This prophecy has never yet been fulfilled.

If you are willing to learn the lessons of this life and overcome as Jesus Christ did, you will be able to help fulfill these words of Isaiah for generations of people in the Kingdom of God.

What you do now, and how well you do it will determine your reward in God's Kingdom.

Those who learn to submit themselves to God's will, in obedience to His law as it is revealed in His word, will inherit the glory and the responsibilities of the very Family of God.

Those who resist God's instruction, who fail to overcome their carnal human nature, will be cast out to have no part in the wonderful future God offers.

The promise of a wonderful reward is only open to those who do overcome. Undreamed-of powers to remake this world into a happy, productive, peaceful place will be placed in the hands of those who are faithful in the "little" they have been given.

Rewards Last FOR ETERNITY

1. What ultimate reward is promised to those who overcome? Rev. 21:7, Heb. 2:6-8. Although we are lowly men now, does God promise to crown us with glory and honor? Verse 7. In addition, will He set us over the works of His hands as a reward? Same verse. Does that include ALL THINGS— the entire universe? Verse 8.

2. After His plan is completed, and God the Father descends to earth to begin to establish the New Heavens and the New Earth, who will walk in the Holy City? Rev. 21:23-26. But who will be kept out? Verse 27. What will happen to those who refuse to be happy obeying God's laws? Rev. 21:8.

3. Will the Family of God be centered in the Holy City? Rev. 22:3-6. Will all have thrones or jobs to do? Verse 5 notice last part, "they shall *reign* for ever and ever."

4. What is Jesus Christ's final admonition recorded in the Bible? Rev. 22:10-15. Is Christ coming *quickly* to reward everyone according to their works? Verse 12. Who are those who are given eternal life, and the reward of being in the capital city of the Universe for eternity, refashioning and creating the New Heavens and the New Earth? Verse 14. Is God preparing to make all things new? Rev. 21:5.

COMMENT: Those who are given the gift of eternal life, and inherit dominion over this earth according to the promise made to Abraham, will be given a position of rulership in God's Family for eternity.

What each one does as a part of God's Family will depend on what he is doing now! And each will have the chance to participate in the making of ALL THINGS NEW!

The Bible is God's revelation to man of the basic knowledge man needs to become a part of that Kingdom.

God has not revealed what His plans are after He begins to make all things new. He only gives us the briefest glimpse of what lies ahead. We do know that there will be no end to God's Kingdom. It will continue to grow and grow. Each one who qualifies for a reward in God's Kingdom will grow with it.

With such a wonderful goal ahead, and the knowledge that God will help us achieve it by the power of His Spirit, each one of us should be stirred to greater zeal, greater effort, greater accomplishment.

In the next lesson of this Correspondence Course you will learn the important part faith plays in your life, and how by exercising faith you can achieve this goal, the purpose for which you have been born.